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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

SUMMONS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

TO: THE LORD MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND THE COUNCILLORS OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Notice is hereby given that the monthly meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast and via Microsoft Teams on Monday, 8th January, 2024 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 8)
5. Official Announcements
6. Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 9 - 50)
7. Minutes of People and Communities Committee (Pages 51 - 78)
8. Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 79 - 116)
9. Minutes of Licensing Committee (Pages 117 - 136)
10. Minutes of Planning Committee (Pages 137 - 158)
11. Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 159 - 168)
12. Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

The Members of Belfast City Council are hereby summoned to attend.

Chief Executive

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Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall and remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Monday, 4th December, 2023 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy) (Chairperson); and
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; and
Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, R. Brooks, T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R. M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Hanvey, Kelly, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan).

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Beattie declared an interest in relation to the item “Social Supermarkets Update” within the People and Communities Committee minutes in that the company he worked for was involved in the scheme.

Councillor Canavan declared an interest in relation to the item “Social Supermarkets Update” within the People and Communities Committee minutes in that she was a committee member of an organisation involved in the scheme.

Councillor Doherty declared an interest in relation to the item “Social Supermarkets Update” within the People and Communities Committee minutes in that he worked for a charity which was involved in the scheme.

Councillor Donnelly declared an interest in relation to the item “Social Supermarkets Update” within the People and Communities Committee minutes, in that he worked for a charity which was involved in the scheme, and the item “Update on Physical Programme” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, on the basis that he was a board member on the Black Mountain Shared Space Project.

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Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the item “Smokefree Generation consultation response and update on Vaping - Notice of Motion” within the People and Communities Committee minutes in that he had been involved in the scheme through his employment.

Councillor McDonough-Brown declared an interest in relation to the Motion “Cost of School Uniforms and P.E. Kits”, in that his wife was employed by Save the Children.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in relation to the item “Update on the MAC (Metropolitan Arts Centre)” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, on the basis that it was a client of the company for which he worked.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy),
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 1st November and the Special meeting of 29th November be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

Councillor Carson congratulated St. Oliver Plunket Primary School on having been announced as the gold winner of the Award for Making a Difference - Primary School of the Year in the 2023 Pearson National Teaching Awards and asked the Lord Mayor to host a reception for representatives from the school to recognize the achievement. The Lord Mayor acceded to Councillor Carson’s request.

Councillor McCabe congratulated the Council on its recent success at the Onus NI Awards, where it received a platinum award for being a safe employer and a safe city award, which recognised the Council’s work with city partners.

Councillor Kelly congratulated boxer, Lewis Crocker on winning the WBA Continental Europe welterweight title.

The Lord Mayor commended boxer, Tyrone McKenna who had announced his retirement from the sport and wished him well for the future.

Councillor Bunting congratulated all of the groups which had recently taken part in the Belfast in Bloom awards, and commended Council officer, Ms. L. Murray, for organizing the contest.

Councillor R. Brooks and Councillor Flynn congratulated the Ledley Hall Boys’ and Girls’ Club for being awarded the King’s Award for Voluntary Service and also PIPS Suicide Prevention Ireland, St. Vincent de Paul and the Chinese Welfare Society who had also received recognition. The Lord Mayor acceded to a request from Councillor Flynn to offer

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commiserations to Ardcarne Local Residents Group, which was nominated but did not receive an award, to commend the residents group on its invaluable work.

Councillor Murray acknowledged World Aids Day and Homeless Awareness Week and recommended that Members take time to visit some of the city's homeless services to see their invaluable work.

Councillor Smyth commended Mr. Conor McKinney on his work which had successfully returned the starlings to the Albert Bridge and he requested that the Lord Mayor write to Mr. McKinney to acknowledge his achievement. The Lord Mayor acceded to the request.

Councillor McCormick commended Bangor Rugby Club who had been singing in the city centre to raise money for PIPS Suicide Prevention.

Councillor Doherty thanked the Council and the Lord Mayor for hosting the Remembrance Day for Roads Victims event in the City Hall.

Councillor S. Douglas commended the Council and for its Christmas lights switch-on event and remarked that the event's success was in part, due to the traffic restrictions within the city centre.

Councillor de Faoite offered condolences to the family of the late Bishop Tony Farquhar, former Auxiliary Bishop of Down and Connor and asked the Lord Mayor to write to his sister to express condolences on behalf of the city. The Lord Mayor acceded to the request.

Councillor I. McLaughlin commended the organisers and participants of the Annual Shankill Winterfest.

Councillor Collins congratulated author, Mr. Michael Magee on his success from his novel, Close to Home and requested that the Lord Mayor write to him to congratulate him on his successes. The Lord Mayor acceded to the request.

Councillor McMullan acknowledged the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and paid tribute to Disability Action and Council officers who had organised an event in the City Hall to recognise the day.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Black,
Seconded by Councillor Beattie,

Belfast 2024

At the request of Councillor Nelson, the Council agreed that the minute under the heading "Belfast 2024" be amended to reflect that the Committee agreed to write to Translink with regard to the use of night busses for evening events in 2024.

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Update on Physical Programme

At the request of Councillor de Faoite, the Chief Executive agreed that he would provide clarity to the Member, on whether the legal opinion to be sought on the validity of the decision to exclude Northern Ireland from the latest round of Levelling Up funding would be provided by the Council's Legal Services Department.

Consultation on City Centre Byelaws

The Chief Executive acceded to a request from Councillor McCullough, to bring a report back to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the Consultation of City Centre Byelaws.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing additions, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 24th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Murray,
Seconded by Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly,

**Smokefree Generation consultation response
and update on Vaping - Notice of Motion**

At the request of Councillor Murray, the Council adopted the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 7th November, subject to the replacement of the word 'vapes' with 'tobacco products' in the minute under the heading "Smoke Free Generation Consultation Response and update on Vaping – Notice of Motion".

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nic Bhranair,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 8th and 22nd November, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor McKeown,
Seconded by Councillor Smyth, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 15th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

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Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Whyte,

Committee Site Visits

At the request of Councillor Carson, the Council agreed that the minute under the heading “Committee Site Visits” be amended to include a site visit in respect of LA04/2022/2103/F - Proposed change of use and redevelopment of the existing waste management facility and adjoining plant hire business to create a new waste disposal installation for the incineration of healthcare and hazardous waste streams and associated works, 1 and 2 Duncrue Pass, Belfast.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing addition, the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 14th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders’ Committee

Moved by Councillor Bower,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders’ Committee of 13th November be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor McCabe,

Update – Belfast Sustainable Food Partnerships

At the request of the Chief Executive, the Council agreed that, due to a typographical error, the minute under the heading “Update – Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership” be amended to reflect that the allocation of £30,000 would be from within the City and Organisational Strategy budget.

Kerbside EV Proposal from BT (Presentation BT Openreach)

At the request of Councillor T. Brooks, the Council agreed to amend the minute under the heading “ Kerbside EV Proposal from BT (Presentation BT Openreach)” to reflect that during discussion, the representatives from BT Openreach agreed to undertake to work with The Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) with regard to the design and/or evaluation of the technical trial.

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Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendments, the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 9th November, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor McDonough-Brown,
Seconded by Councillor McCormick, and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 28th November, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Motion

Cost of School Uniforms and P.E. Kits

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Bunting proposed:

"That this Council recognises that the uncapped cost of school uniforms and PE kits is causing financial hardship for many families across the borough. A recent poll from Save the Children NI revealed that a third of parents in Northern Ireland have had to borrow money to pay for their child's uniform and PE items, while 6 in 10 parents were financially challenged trying to cover the cost. In recognition of this ongoing hardship, this Council will write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education expressing concern for children and their parents and request that his department take action as a matter of urgency to address the long-standing problem."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Kelly

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Doherty,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the following paragraphs be added to the end of the motion:

"and request that his Department put in place robust and enforceable measures to require schools to provide for affordable uniform options from a range of suppliers.

Furthermore, this Council notes that work to address this issue had commenced before the collapse of the last Executive but has been stalled as a result of the absence of an Education Minister, and regrets that it is families who are being impacted from the resulting lack of progress. This is being compounded by the

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continued unconscionable budget cuts made by Chris Heaton-Harris MP as a tactic in his attempts to negotiate with the Democratic Unionist Party.

Belfast City Council will therefore write to Jeffrey Donaldson MP to express its frustration at the DUP's failure to live up to its responsibilities, and ask that it take up its place in an Executive without further delay so Ministers rather than civil servants can make decisions to tackle the cost of living crisis facing our community."

On a vote, forty-one Members voted for the amendment and fourteen against and it was declared carried.

The Motion, as amended, was thereupon put the Council as follows:

"That this Council recognises that the uncapped cost of school uniforms and PE kits is causing financial hardship for many families across the borough. A recent poll from Save the Children NI revealed that a third of parents in Northern Ireland have had to borrow money to pay for their child's uniform and PE items, while 6 in 10 parents were financially challenged trying to cover the cost. In recognition of this ongoing hardship, this Council will write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education expressing concern for children and their parents and request that his department take action as a matter of urgency to address the long-standing problem and request that his Department put in place robust and enforceable measures to require schools to provide for affordable uniform options from a range of suppliers.

Furthermore, this Council notes that work to address this issue had commenced before the collapse of the last Executive but has been stalled as a result of the absence of an Education Minister, and regrets that it is families who are being impacted from the resulting lack of progress. This is being compounded by the continued unconscionable budget cuts made by Chris Heaton-Harris MP as a tactic in his attempts to negotiate with the Democratic Unionist Party.

Belfast City Council will therefore write to Jeffrey Donaldson MP to express its frustration at the DUP's failure to live up to its responsibilities and ask that it take up its place in an Executive without further delay so Ministers rather than civil servants can make decisions to tackle the cost of living crisis facing our community."

On a vote, forty-one Members voted for the amended Motion and fourteen against and it was declared carried.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

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Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Tuesday, 12th December, 2023

SPECIAL 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, de Faoite, M. Donnelly, R.M. Donnelly, Ferguson, Garrett, Hanvey, Long, Maghie, Maskey, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Nic Bhranair and Smyth.

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;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Ms. E. Clarke, Belfast 2024 Programme Manager;
Ms. L A O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;
and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors Cobain and Nelson.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following three 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 three 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.

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Update on Belfast 2024

The Committee considered a report and associated presentation on the full Belfast 2024 overview, strategic case and rationale.

After discussion, the Committee agreed again to defer consideration of the matter until January, 2024 to enable those issues which had been raised both at this meeting and the meeting which had been held on 24th November to be addressed.

Update on the MAC

The Committee considered a report in relation to a funding requirement for The MAC, and agreed to defer again, until January, 2024, a request to provide The MAC with funding of £50k to assist it in addressing a significant in-year operating deficit

**Appointment of Independent Members
to the Northern Ireland Policing Board**

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services advised the Committee that, under the terms of the Northern Ireland (Executive Formation, etc) Act 2022, the Secretary of State had powers to exercise the appointment of certain appointment functions of Northern Ireland Ministers, including those relating to the NI Policing Board (NIPB).

The current terms of appointment of three Board members would expire at the end of March 2024, and the Secretary of State had proposed that the Department of Justice commence a recruitment exercise in order to fill these three vacancies.

She explained that Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 1 of the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 required consultation with the First and Deputy First Minister, district councils and other such bodies as are considered appropriate before making any appointment of independent members to the Board. The Secretary of State had therefore written to Council Chief Executives advising of the proposal to appoint three independent Board members and setting out the criteria for the competition and was seeking any comments in relation to this process by 12.00noon on 15th December.

The Committee noted receipt of the correspondence from the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland in relation to the appointment of Independent Members to the Northern Ireland Policing Board and agreed that the Chief Executive submit any comments which any Member might wish to make regarding the required criteria by the response deadline. The Committee agreed also that due to the consultation deadline that the matter be not subject to call-in.

Chairperson

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,
Hanvey, 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.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 15th December, 2023**

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.

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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

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				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.
The distribution of City Matters (Belfast City Council's resident's magazine) *Approved March 2023 for 2 years, now reviewed to 3 years (no additional cost)	Up to 3 years	£140,000	E. McConville	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.
Integrated software solution/ In-cab technology for fleet telematics and vehicle routing	Up to 10 years	£4,300,000	C Matthews	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.

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
MTC Mechanical Services Cover	Up to 3 months	£150,000	S. Grimes	This tender/contract has experienced ongoing issues due to a previous legal challenge which	WJM Building Services Ltd.	11

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				<p>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 until the new contract is in place.</p>		
Continued use of the HR and Payroll System	Up to 2 years	£313,325	S. McNicholl	<p>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.</p>	Zellis UK Ltd	3
Provision of a Carnival Parade / Pageant for St Patrick's Day 2023	Up to 1 year	£45,000	J. Greer	<p>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.</p>	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	Podiem Ltd

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				assessments over the next 3 months and requires an extension of contract length with no further budget allocation.	
T1872 Provision of animal healthcare services at Belfast Zoo	Up to 64 months	Additional 2 months	J. Greer	An additional 2-months is required to ensure continuity of service whilst tender process is completed.	Jubilee Veterinary Centre
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.	Up to 1 year	Additional 4 months	J. Greer	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.	Ulster Supported Employment Limited (USEL)
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	Up to 8 months	Additional 4 months	J. Greer	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	Café Nosh

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(based pre-Covid figures), of which a minimum 5% commission will be payable to the Council.				requirements and to advertise the tender.	
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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

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<p>Annual property asset valuations *Previously approved March 2023 for £165,000 for 3 years, now reviewed discussions/ negotiations with LPS.</p>	<p>Up to 5 years</p>	<p>£310,000</p>	<p>S. Grimes</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>LPS</p>	<p>3</p>
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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.

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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

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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

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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;

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- 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

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- 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,

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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

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- 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 Faoite, 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

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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.

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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;

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- 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:

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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=c3wl5gXyd48> 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.

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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](https://commonpurpose.org/legacy/northern-ireland-legacy) or through <https://commonpurpose.org/legacy/northern-ireland-legacy>

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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

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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 Livingstone 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;

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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	A and D	No (Charity)	Yes,	Approve No Charge

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
		<p>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.</p> <p>Numbers attending - 100</p>			Tea and coffee Reception	Tea and Coffee Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>
Sisters In (charity) and Podiem	7th February, 2024	<p>Celebration/ Recognition of Female Entrepreneurship – 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	Approve No Charge Tea and Coffee Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer for wine on arrival</i>

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

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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

People and Communities Committee

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HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mrs. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director City Operations;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Also, in
attendance: Councillors T. Brooks, B. Smyth and R. McDowell.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The Committee was asked to note that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 7th November had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th December, subject to the replacement of the word 'vapes' with 'tobacco products' in the minute under the heading – Smoke Free Generation Consultation Response and update on Vaping – Notice of Motion.

The minutes of the meeting of 7th November were taken as read and signed as correct, subject to the foregoing amendment.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Canavan declared an interest in Agenda Item 2 (a) Presentation – Review of Advice Services as she was a Board Member of Springfield Charitable Association which was in receipt of funding from Advice Services and she left the meeting whilst the matter was being considered.

Councillor Black declared an interest in Agenda Item 5 (c) 2023 Leisure Centre Holiday Recreation Scheme as she worked in the Grosvenor Community Centre and she took no part in the discussion.

Request to Present - Forward South Partnership

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation at a future meeting from the Forward South Partnership to provide an overview of the Open Botanic Festival.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following four 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 four 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.

Presentation - Review of Advice Services

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. D. Williamson from Williamson consulting to the meeting who had been appointed by the Council to undertake an independent external review into the provision of advice services funded by Belfast City Council (BCC).

Mr. Williamson commenced by providing the Members with an overview of the current provision. This included detail in respect of the current issues facing the sector, including changes to benefits, inflation, an increase in clients with complex needs and the difficulties that providers faced with the recruitment and retention of staff. He continued to provide an overview of the current structure and funding mechanisms, advising that:

- funding was currently allocated on an historical formula across 5 areas: East, North, South and West and Central Belfast;
- the allocation of funding by providers was determined by each consortium with BCC agreement; and
- tribunals were mostly dealt with by the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service.

He then provided an overview of the consortia performance, which included detail in respect of the monitoring and performance undertaken and he highlighted that no Council apart from Belfast utilised a 'grant funding' approach.

The representative concluded by detailing a number of recommended changes that Belfast City Council could make to improve the delivery of advice services.

At this stage in proceedings the Chairperson thanked the representative for his informative presentation on the review findings and he left the meeting.

The Committee then considered a report which detailed the proposed recommendations for progressing the changes, as had been detailed by the consultant.

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The Director advised that the review had highlighted that, given the longstanding nature of the current arrangements and in order to avoid negative impacts to service delivery, it was recommended that any changes would be introduced on an incremental basis in 2024/25 and 2025/26. It had also noted that the current model was area based and used population and deprivation figures to identify need and that these needed to be revised to reflect the most up to date figures. Given that this would have a significant impact on providers, it was recommended that this change was not fully implemented until April 2026.

The Committee was also reminded that there was no dedicated budget for BCTS and that since 2012 it had received funding from the Council either through a Notice of Motion or committee consideration of a request from the service in year. The review had highlighted that this approach was not sustainable and that BCTS support should be included as part of an overall advice funding budget.

The Committee noted:

- the contents of the report and presentation and agreed that officers engage with the Belfast Advice Group and other stakeholders to progress the review recommendations;
- that officers would carry out further engagement with Elected Members to agree a future funding approach for Advice Services; and
- the current funding arrangements for the Belfast Citywide Tribunal Service (BCTS) for the 2024/25 financial year.

Quarter 2 Finance Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report which summarised the Quarter 2 financial position for the People and Communities Committee, including a forecast of the year end outturn. It noted that the Quarter 2 position showed an under spend of £1.4m (2.9%), with the forecast year end position being an underspend of £454k (0.5%), which was well within the acceptable variance limit of 0.1%.

The Members were advised that the main reasons for the quarter 2 Committee underspend related to vacant posts across a number of services, the receipt of additional income and the timing of grants and programmes.

Following a query from a Member, the Strategic Director confirmed that there remained a significant number of vacant positions throughout the department and he advised that every effort was being made to recruit the posts which were mostly being filled by agency staff.

The Committee noted the financial update.

Large scale events - Annual Review

The Committee considered a report which provided an evaluation of the large promoter events that had taken place at Belfast Park venues throughout 2023. The Members were

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advised that 12 events had been held across 6 venues, 9 music events, 1 funfair and 2 circuses. The evaluation provided comprehensive detail in respect of income, engagement sessions, noise complaints and the necessary agreements including entertainment and site licence agreements.

The Members welcomed the engagement that had taken place with the various stakeholders and encouraged more of the same for the events proposed in 2024, using the Belsonic model of engagement.

Several of the Members also referred to the social value levy contributions and discussed their desire to see these reinvested back into the local areas from which they had derived. The Members also discussed the need to manage peoples' expectations as to just what could be achieved with the contributions.

The Committee:

- agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting on agreeing a more structured approach for large scale city events, including engagement with residents, promoters, and Elected Members; and
- noted that a report would be submitted to a future meeting with recommendations on how the social levy fund should be invested back into the park locations for the long-term benefit of local communities.

Saint Brigid's GAC / Musgrave Park

The Committee considered a report which detailed a proposed approach regarding future options for the management of Musgrave Park.

The Committee agreed, in principle, to extend the management agreement at Musgrave Park to St Brigids' GAC for a 25-year period, with Council officers to liaise with St Brigid's to identify the appropriate options to provide for the continuation of its management. The Committee noted that this would be subject to due diligence and that an update report would be submitted to committee in due course.

Matters referred back from the Council/Motions

**Notice of Motion – Feasibility
Study into a Blackstaff Greenway**

The Democratic Services Officer informed the Members that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 28th November, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor T. Brooks and seconded by Councillor Murray, to the People and Communities Committee for consideration:

“This Council recognises the success of Belfast's greenways in creating a green lung in the city, providing respite from traffic and delivering safe, accessible routes to employment, education and leisure. It agrees to undertake a feasibility study into a Blackstaff Greenway, which would follow the route of the Blackstaff

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river from the Stockman's Way roundabout through Boucher Road playing fields and continuing through the Boucher Estate terminating at the 'Rise' sculpture; recommends that such a feasibility study should examine connections to Adelaide Train Station; and where a full greenway is not possible this study should also examine alternatives, including the creation of a shared cycle and pedestrian path or the creation of a walking trail."

With the permission of the Chairperson, the proposer of the motion, Councillor T. Brooks, addressed the Committee and provided an overview of the motion which included the sharing of a map which clearly detailed the area being proposed.

A Member suggested that as a positive example of a similar initiative officers should look at the Southwest Gateway when undertaking the feasibility study.

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed would be submitted to a future meeting.

Notice of Motion - Tiny Urban Forests

The Democratic Services Officer informed the Members that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 28th November, had referred the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Smyth and seconded by Councillor D. Douglas, to the People and Communities Committee for consideration:

"This Council notes the work that has begun in Plymouth to create 96 mini urban forests in the city and is pioneered by Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki. The Miyawaki forestation method is a unique way to create an urban forest. With this method of plantation, an urban forest can grow within a short span of 20-30 years while a conventional forest takes upwards of 100 years plus to grow naturally. In the Miyawaki technique, various native species of plants are planted close to each other so that the greens receive sunlight only from the top and grow upwards than sideways. As a result, the plantation becomes approximately 30 times denser, grows 10 times faster and becomes maintenance-free after a span of 3 years.

Tiny Forests are community-led tree-planting initiatives which aim to improve local access to green space and help communities to better understand the challenges faced by nature. These forests are very much suited for small pockets of unused wasteland in urban settings, as well in places such as schools, community centres etc. Urban forests bring many benefits to communities beyond their impact on biodiversity. Green spaces can help to improve people's mental health, reduce the harmful effects of air pollution, and even counter the phenomenon of heat traps in cities, where expanses of concrete and asphalt raise temperatures unnaturally high. We are already aware of a lack of tree coverage in our built up working class areas throughout the city and this offers an opportunity to tackle this, as well as enhancing our urban biodiversity and understanding of the importance of it.

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This Council will commit to working with its partners in the One Million Trees project to explore the viability of Tiny Urban Forests being incorporated into it.”

With the permission of the Chairperson, the proposer of the motion, Councillor Smyth, addressed the Committee and provided an overview of the motion.

The Committee adopted the motion and agreed that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed would be submitted to a future meeting.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Notice of Motion Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide an update to People and Communities Committee on Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance by Members.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that People and Communities Committee:

- **Notes the updates to all Notices of Motion / Issues Raised in Advance that the Committee is responsible for as referenced in Appendix 1; and**
- **Agree to the closure of Issues Raised in Advance and Notices of Motion as referenced in Appendix 1 and outlined below.**

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 Members will recall that the previous Notices of Motion update was presented to People and Communities Committee in June 2023.

3.2 This report provides an overview of the progress on those Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which remained open following the June 23 update.

3.3 Notice of Motion Updates

There are currently 31 active Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which the People and Communities Committee is responsible for. An update on those Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which remain active on the live database is attached at Appendix 1.

3.4 Closure of Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance

At SP&R Committee on 20th November 2020, it was agreed that Notices of Motion could be closed for one of two reasons:

- Category 1 - Notices of Motion which contained an action that has been completed. All Notices of Motion within this category contained a specific task that has since been complete. It is worth noting that, when Committee agree to action a Notice of Motion, there are sometimes additional actions agreed alongside the Notice of Motion. As these are not technically part of the Notice of Motion, they are taken forward through normal committee decision making processes. The Notice of Motion can therefore be closed, but additional actions related to it will continue to be progressed and reported to the committee. These additional actions are not contained in this report, but will be noted in the live database moving forward.
- Category 2 - Notices of Motion have become Council policy or absorbed in to a strategic programme of work. These Notices of Motion did not contain a specific task that could be complete. Instead, they were more strategic in nature and required changes in Council policy and/ or strategy for long term outcomes. Those listed within this category have all been agreed by Committee and are now either Council policy or are currently being implemented through a Council strategy that is managed by a Standing Committee through the corporate planning process.
- Following an update of those Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance on the live database, it is recommended that Members approve the following Motions/Issues for closure.

3.5 Category 1 Recommended Closures:

Belfast Cycle Network (Ref 285)

As advised in the June 2023 update, processes are in place within Council to address any cleansing issues relating to the cycle network - however, enforcement of obstructions lies with Dfl. BCC officers continue to engage with key partners, in particular Dfl, through established Community Planning structures, however, enforcement of obstructions is not within BCC's remit and lies solely with Dfl.

The Department for Infrastructure has reminded all drivers to 'Think before you Park' ahead of the introduction of new parking restrictions which came into operation on Friday 3rd November. The new restrictions coming into force will help to address this issue by prohibiting parking wholly or partly on a footway at a number of specific locations, including footways adjacent to;

- a bus lane;
- the limits of any bus stop in a lay-by or any bus stop as delineated by markings on the carriageway at any time;
- the limits of any bus stand in a lay-by or any bus stand as delineated by markings on the carriageway at any time;
- the limits of any mandatory cycle lane as delineated by markings on the carriageway at any time; and
- the limits of any mandatory school keep clear as delineated by markings on the carriageway at any time.

3.6 The Rule also revokes and re-enacts existing prohibitions on footways. All vehicles found to be in breach of the new restrictions will receive a £90 Penalty Charge Notice, discounted to £45 if paid within 14 days.

3.7 Further details on the new parking restrictions can be found at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/news/drivers-reminded-think-you-park-new-parking-restrictions-come-operation>

3.8 Given that the specific requests within the Motion have been addressed and that the Council has no further powers to exercise in this regard, it is suggested that this Motion is closed.

3.9 Vaping (Ref 313)

A report updating on progress in relation to this Motion including updates on current policy context and recent strategic level engagements in relation to tobacco control and vaping issues; and a draft BCC response to the 'Creating a Smoke Free Generation' public consultation was noted and agreed at the P&C November 23 Committee meeting. With regards to the proposal for 'the Council to ban the use of vapes by under 18s in all its sites and premises', the Corporate Health and Safety Manager will bring a report to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in due course regarding the use of electronic cigarettes in Council sites and premises. Given that the specific actions requested within this Motion have been addressed, it is recommended that this Motion is now closed.

3.10 Lagan Valley Regional Park (Ref 323)

As agreed at August 2023 P&C Committee, a letter was issued to DfI outlining concerns at the withdrawal of funding for LVRP. A response was received and presented to P&C Committee in November 2023. As the specific action within this Issue Raised in Advance has been undertaken, it is recommended that this Issue is now closed.

3.11 Request to receive a presentation – Causeway Coast Dog Rescue (Ref 333)

The People and Communities Committee received a presentation from Causeway Coast Dog Rescue at its meeting on 10 October 2023 - it is therefore recommended that this Issue is now closed as the specific action within has been addressed.

3.12 Category 2 Recommended Closures

Policy regarding Bilingual Signage for New Developments (Ref 334)

A report on Dual Language Street Signage applications made by developers was presented to the People and Communities Committee meeting in November 2023 - the Committee agreed to adopt the recommendations as defined in the report and agreed to the proposed process. It is recommended that this Issue is now closed.

3.13 Financial and Resource Implications

There are no additional financial implications required to implement these recommendations.

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

There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications associated with this report.”

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

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Cavehill Mountain Biking Pilot Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 9th November 2021, it had agreed the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and Cavehill Mountainbikers Club which had underpinned a Mountain Biking Pilot Project in Cavehill

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Country Park focusing on a partnership approach to the Club's management of the 'The Middle' trail.

The Strategic Director advised that the MOU agreement, which had commenced in December 2021, for a two-year duration, stated that longer-term extension of the agreement with the Club was "subject to successful conclusion (in the opinion of the Council) of the pilot focusing on 'The Middle' trail, "satisfactory review and evaluation and internal Council committee approval".

He reported that a project Oversight Board had met regularly throughout the pilot period, this was made up of representatives from the Council, the Cavehill Mountainbikers Club, the Belfast Hills Partnership and the Cavehill Conservation Trust. In line with the MOU he advised that officers intended to evaluate the pilot project using the agreed evaluation framework and to submit a report to committee for its consideration.

Given the December 2023 end date of the current MOU, the Committee was asked to agree a two-month extension of the existing MOU between BCC and Cavehill Mountain Bikers Club to enable the existing management arrangements with the Club to remain in place until the report detailing the findings of the evaluation and recommendations were submitted to Committee in early 2024.

The Committee acceded to the request.

Playground Improvement Programme

(Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services (OS Portfolio Lead), attended in connection with this item.)

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 Officers are seeking approval to enhance our ongoing independent inspection process for Playgrounds. In addition to the annual suite of independent playground safety inspections, members are asked to approve an additional independent audit that will assess 'play value' and accessibility of all council-maintained playgrounds. It is proposed that 'Play Value' and accessibility scores arising from this additional audit will inform site selection for future Playground Inspection Programmes (PIP).

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 In addition to next year's planned suite of independent safety inspections Committee is asked to agree that an independent audit of 'play value' and accessibility is undertaken at all council-maintained playgrounds.

- 2.2 Committee is also asked to agree that ‘play value’ and accessibility scores will inform site selection for future Playground Improvement Programmes, replacing ‘quality’ scores derived from annual playground safety inspections.
- 2.3 Committee is also asked to note that potential infrastructure improvements (E.G Toilet Provision), identified by the audit, will be used to inform future capital projects in our parks and open spaces.
- 3.0 **Main report**
- Playground Improvement Programme**
- 3.1 Since its inception in 2012, playgrounds to be refurbished under PIP have been selected using quality scores from annual, safety inspection reports. This assessment method provided council with scores for each playground that helped rank play facilities in most need of improvement. The current inspection process focuses on the quality and compliance of existing play equipment but does not audit the types of play opportunities provided or how accessible they are.
- 3.2 Over the previous eleven years PIP has made a positive impact on the overall quality of the city’s playgrounds. The first suite of independent, annual inspections in 2012 recorded:
- 25% of all playgrounds were classified as ‘poor’ condition
 - 33% of all playgrounds were classified as ‘fair’ condition
 - 42% of all playgrounds were classified as ‘good’ condition
- 3.3 Following more than a decade of investment, exceeding £6 million across more than 50 sites, the overall quality has dramatically improved. This year’s suite of annual independent safety inspections recorded:
- 1% of all playgrounds are classified as ‘poor’ condition
 - 6% of all playgrounds are classified as ‘fair’ condition
 - 93% of all playgrounds are classified as ‘good’ condition
- 3.4 Following delivery of PIP 2023-24, in parallel with ongoing citywide operational maintenance and repairs, we anticipate that 100% of our playgrounds to be classified as ‘good’ by the end of this financial year. This will be the first time, since the inception of PIP, that all playgrounds will be classified as a ‘good’ in terms of existing equipment. This provides an opportunity for the Council to go beyond an assessment of safety compliance and quality of existing equipment and audit the ‘play value’ and accessibility of our playgrounds.

- 3.5 Officers are therefore proposing a new assessment approach that will be used to rank play facilities in terms of 'Play Value' and accessibility. 'Play value' and accessibility scores associated with the proposed audit would then be used to select playgrounds to be refurbished under future Playground Improvement Programmes (PIP).
- 3.6 If approved, members should note that independent annual playground safety inspections will continue each year to help identify essential repairs and ensure ongoing compliance with relevant safety standards (see Appendix 3) and ensure facilities remain in a good condition. These assessments would occur in tandem with the new assessment approach.
- 3.7 If approved the proposed audit will align with best practice guidance from consultants and organisations such as Playboard NI, Mae Murray Foundation, Play Services Ireland, Play England and Play Scotland. Council's Play Development Team, Landscape Planning & Development Team and OSS Operational Managers have also helped inform the approach. Officers have held discussions with Playboard NI and Mae Murray Foundation and initial feedback to the proposal has been positive. Further meetings are planned for December.
- 3.8 Assessing play value and accessibility will allow council to identify playgrounds that, although good in terms of the quality and safety compliance of their equipment, would benefit from an enhanced range of play opportunities and accessible elements.
- 3.9 In terms of a strategic fit, improving the 'play value' and accessibility of council-maintained playgrounds helps deliver a key outcome in the Belfast Agenda around providing a city that is safe, fair and inclusive for all. This approach also aligns with key principles in the Belfast Open Spaces Strategy's that aim to provide welcoming shared spaces and improve health and well-being.
- 3.10 This proposal seeks to align the assessment of Playgrounds to a number of Notices of Motion. See Appendix 1.
- Notice of Motion – September 2019 – Play Facilities for Children with Disabilities
 - Notice of Motion – June 2022 – Inclusive Play Parks

'Play Value'

- 3.11 'Play value' is used to describe the value an environment, object or piece of equipment brings to a child's experience of play, with

high 'play value' indicating that children can play in many different ways. Through play children learn and develop their cognitive skills, problem-solving, social skills, and their fine and gross motor skills.

3.12 Play is generally divided into three types:

- Physical - rotating, sliding, rocking, swinging, climbing, balancing, bouncing, crawling and gliding
- Sensory - tactile, auditory, cognitive, interaction with natural features / quiet spaces
- Social – social / cooperative play and imaginative / themed play

3.13 Each type of play is crucial to a child's development and enjoyment of a playground. Going forward, we want to increase opportunities for all three types of play and for each type to be more accessible.

Assessing 'Play Value and accessibility'

3.14 The proposed assessment template (see Appendix 3) is derived from a combination of tools used by Play Scotland, Play England and Play Services Ireland Ltd (see Appendix 4, template previously used by other councils in N. Ireland, Scotland and Dublin).

3.15 In line with key recommendations set out in the 'Let Me Play' report, produced by PlayBoard NI and Mae Murray Foundation, we have expanded the proposed assessment template to include an evaluation of how accessible our playgrounds are for children of all ages and abilities.

3.16 The assessment will allocate a 'play value' and accessibility score for each playground based on the types of play opportunities available and their accessibility.

3.17 The independent audit will also include an assessment of entrances, parking and toilet provision. Whilst the existing PIP budget will continue to be focused on new play equipment and safety surfacing, potential infrastructure improvements identified by the audit will be used to inform future capital projects in our parks and open spaces.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.18 Subject to a competitive tendering process, we envisage 'play value' and accessibility assessments to be carried out by the consultant who will be appointed to undertake ongoing, annual playground safety inspections.

3.19 The cost of the play value and accessibility audit is included within existing revenue estimates.

3.20 The cost of potential infrastructure projects e.g. changing places facilities, car parks are not included within the budget estimates.

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

3.21 None.”

A Member reemphasised her colleagues previous request seeking the Council to consider that a pilot be undertaken in the four areas of the city whereby a fully accessible and inclusive play facility would be piloted in each area of the city.

General discussion ensued during which several Members reiterated the need to ensure that Council parks, public and open spaces were inclusive and accessible spaces for all.

A Member also requested that a list of the independent playground scores for last year, along with the new scores for this year be circulated to the Members. She also asked to be furnished with the details of the mechanism used for the old scoring system and the officer undertook to forward this directly to the Member.

Officers were asked to investigate if a map could be prepared for the Council’s website which would detail the location and play equipment available at Council parks which were inclusive and accessible to disabled children.

During discussion the need for refurbishment/replacement programmes at Braniel, Finvoy Street and the Tommy Patton Parks was raised, and a Member also queried why the Finvoy Park needed upgraded within such a short period of time. She also highlighted that the ground at the Flora Street playpark was breaking, however, the officer advised that this was being pursued with the contractor. It was also noted that swings at the Flora Street and Clara Street needed repaired.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- agreed that, in addition, to next year’s planned suite of independent safety inspections Committee that an independent audit of ‘play value’ and accessibility be undertaken at all council-maintained playgrounds;
- agreed that ‘play value’ and accessibility scores would inform site selection for future Playground Improvement Programmes, replacing ‘quality’ scores derived from annual playground safety inspections;

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- noted that potential infrastructure improvements (for example, Toilet Provision), identified by the audit, would be used to inform future capital projects in Council parks and open spaces;
- agreed to circulate the list of the independent playground scores for last year along with the new scores for this year; and
- agreed to investigate if a map could be prepared for the Council's website which would detail the location and play equipment available at Council parks that were inclusive and accessible to disabled children.

**2023 Leisure Centre Holiday
Recreation Schemes Report**

The Members were reminded that, within the annual centre programming strategy, GLL delivered a range of holiday schemes designed to maximise use of the leisure centres by providing physical activities and social engagement for young people in safe and fun environments. These schemes were designed and delivered to be both inclusive and cross community.

The Members were advised that during school holiday periods the daytime user profiles within Council centres changed to reflect the availability of young people and noted the need for options for parents who might face challenges in home caring for their children.

The Strategic Director of Neighbourhood Services explained that the schemes were organised throughout the year ranging in duration from a few days , for example, Halloween, to six plus weeks during the longer summer break. The schemes were site specific and tailored subject to variations in centre facilities and local demand, rather than being standardised across the city. In addition to general activity schemes, sports specific coaching camps were included in the programme.

The Committee noted that 2023 had been the first full year of holiday schemes being delivered by GLL since centres returned to normal operating conditions following Covid-19 restrictions.

The holiday schemes had developed throughout 2023 and participation had grown steadily. It was anticipated that 2024 schemes would be further expanded and that participant numbers would continue to grow.

The Members noted that Council officers were actively involved with GLL in ongoing developments around the scale and content of the holiday scheme programme.

A Member highlighted that children with special needs were often not able to avail of these schemes due to their high support needs, he detailed the stress that holiday periods often placed on carers and asked for consideration to be given as to how these children might be accommodated in the holiday scheme programme.

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Following discussion, the Committee noted the update and agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting which would consider the inclusion of children with special needs in the holiday scheme programme.

Operational Issues

Pre-Loved Toy Scheme

The Director of Resources and Fleet provided the Members with an update on the 2023 pre-loved toys scheme operated at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) in the run up to Christmas. She reminded the Members that the aim of the initiative was to ease the burden on families during the current cost of living crisis and to increase reuse and reduce waste going to landfill during this period.

She reminded the Members of the success of the 2022 scheme, with around seven tonnes of waste having been diverted from landfill and an estimated 700 families benefitting from the initiative.

The Members were advised that the Council had teamed up with East Belfast Missions (EBM) as the lead re-use logistics partner, EBM would liaise with other charities to distribute the toys back into the community via a network of charity operators. The collection points were located at the Council's four recycling centres and donations would be received up until Monday 11th December.

The Committee noted that, in line with last year's scheme, some items would be resold at affordable prices through charity shops, however, it was envisaged that the vast majority would be gifted free of charge to households in need. The Director asked the Members to contact her directly should they be aware of any charity or community organisation they would like to be considered as a beneficiary of the initiative or alternatively they could signpost the organisation to complete the contact form on the EBM web site: [East Belfast Mission - Contact Us \(ebm.org.uk\)](http://EastBelfastMission-ContactUs.ebm.org.uk).

The Committee noted the update.

Proposal for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To consider applications for the erection of dual language street signs for seven existing streets within the city.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to agree to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at, Dermott Hill Parade, Sunnyhill Park, Knock Eden Park, Fruithill Court, Tullymore Gardens, Pineview Road and Hawthorn View.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

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

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

3.3

<u>English Name</u>	<u>Non- English Name</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Persons surveyed</u>
Dermott Hill Parade, BT12	Paráid Chnoc Dhiarmada	Off Dermott Hill Road, BT12	49
Sunnyhill Park, BT17	Páirc Chnoc na Gréine	Off Dunmurry Lane, BT17	116
Knock Eden Park, BT6	Páirc Chnoc Éadain	Off Knockbreda Road, BT6	193
Fruithill Court, BT11	Cúirt Chnoc na dTorthaí	Off Fruithill Park, BT11	15
Tullymore Gardens, BT11	Gairdíní na Tulaí Móire	Off Glassmullan Gardens, BT11	175
Pineview Road, BT36	Bóthar Radharc na Giúise	Off Whitewell Road, BT36	56
Hawthorn View, BT17	Radharc na Sceiche	Off Hawthorn Glen, BT17	187

3.4 The translations were authenticated by Queens University, the approved translator for Belfast City Council.

3.5 In accordance with the Council's policy for the erection of dual language street signs, surveys of all persons appearing on the electoral register plus owners or tenants in actual possession of

commercial premises, for the above streets were carried out and the following responses were received.

3.6 Dermott Hill Parade, BT12

- 19 occupiers (38.78%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 30 occupiers (61.22%) did not respond to the survey.

3.7 Sunnyhill Park, BT17

- 36 occupiers (31.03%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 6 occupiers (5.17%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 74 occupiers (63.79%) did not respond to the survey.

3.8 Knock Eden Park, BT6

- 55 occupiers (28.50%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 46 occupiers (23.83%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 11 occupiers (5.70%) had no preference either way.
- 81 occupiers (41.97%) did not respond to the survey.

Two residents who are not in support of the dual language street sign at Knock Eden Park have raised concerns about the cost of the signs.

Another resident not in support of the signs has advised that they would wish to keep the existing cast iron heritage sign.

Another resident not in support of the dual language sign at Knock Eden Park was concerned at the low threshold of 15% for the application to be considered and that the applicant remains anonymous.

3.9 Fruithill Court, BT11

- 5 occupiers (33.33%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 10 occupiers (66.67%) did not respond to the survey.

3.10 Tullymore Gardens, BT11

- 70 occupiers (40%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 2 occupiers (1.14%) had no preference either way.

- 103 occupiers (58.86%) did not respond to the survey.

3.11 Pineview Road, BT36

- 21 occupiers (37.5%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 9 occupiers (16.07%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 26 occupiers (46.43%) did not respond to the survey.

3.12 Hawthorn View, BT17

- 64 occupiers (34.22%) were in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 4 occupiers (2.14%) were not in favour of the erection of a second street name plate.
- 2 occupiers (1.07%) had no preference either way.
- 117 occupiers (62.57%) did not respond to the survey.

3.13 Assessment against policy

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

3.14 All of the surveys listed above demonstrate compliance with the threshold contained within the Policy. However the Committee is reminded that the Council retain a residual discretion under the Policy to decide to erect or not to erect a street sign in a language other than English in certain circumstances. This will be done on a case by case basis.

3.15 The Policy states that it may be appropriate to depart from the procedures in this Policy when there are clear reasons for doing so. This may include taking into account:

- (a) the views of the Occupiers of the street;
- (b) the results of the initial assessment for the application, including any identified potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs;
- (c) consideration of the local context of the application;
- (d) any other Council policies or strategies related to the application; and
- (e) all material considerations relating to the application.

3.16 Financial and Resource Implications

There is a cost of approximately £1,740 to cover the cost of the manufacturing and erection of the dual language street signs. The cost for these street signs has been allowed for in the current budget.

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

Each application for a dual language street sign is subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs.

- 3.18** The initial assessments and elected member notification carried out for the seven applications being considered did not identify any potential adverse impacts to prevent the surveys being carried out. However, the Committee is entitled to take into account the concerns raised by the residents as set out above in arriving to their decision.”

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Doherty,

That the Committee agrees to the erection of all the dual language streets as outlined in the report, namely, Dermott Hill Parade, Sunnyhill Park, Knock Eden Park, Fruithill Court, Tullymore Gardens, Pineview Road and Hawthorne View.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor R. Brooks,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That the Committee agrees to the erection of a dual language street sign at Dermott Hill Parade, Sunnyhill Park, Fruithill Court, Tullymore Gardens, Pineview Road and Hawthorn View and not to erect a dual language sign at Knock Eden Park.

On a vote, 5 Members voted for the amendment and 14 against and it was declared lost.

Further Amendment

Moved by Councillor Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor Bunting,

That the Committee agrees to re survey Knock Eden Park and to erect dual language street signs at the remaining locations.

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On a vote, 10 Members voted for the further amendment and 9 against and it was declared carried.

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

The Committee agreed the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at Dermott Hill Parade, Sunnyhill Park, Fruithill Court, Tullymore Gardens, Pineview Road and Hawthorn View and to re survey Knock Eden Park.

DfI/PSNI Street Access Pilot Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To provide an update to members on the interagency exercise to improve access for BCC collection vehicles for identified problem streets across Belfast.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to note the contents of the update report.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Background

3.2 As outlined within the Resources and Fleet Waste Update presented at the September meeting of the People and Communities Committee, members may be aware of the ongoing work to look at addressing the issues around access to certain streets for our collection vehicles.

Members will be aware that following the single item Committee meeting in March 2023 to discuss access issues, officers have engaged with officers from the PSNI and DFI to look at what measures might be available within their remit to assist collection crews.

3.3 By September, BCC officers had identified the most affected streets, based on crew reporting and residents' calls. In parallel to a separate piece of work on the viability of smaller vehicles to increase success rates of collections, these streets had been prioritised by difficulty and sorted by post code.

Update

- 3.4 As a next step the streets were assessed internally by Waste Collection to identify which streets
- currently had parking restrictions in place
 - might benefit from additional parking restrictions
- 3.5 BCC Officers have continued to engage with DFI in the first instance to move the project forward. This however was delayed due to staff within the Department moving to new roles. Once new contacts were established with DFI officials in late October 2023, a virtual meeting took place between BCC Officers and DFI Officers on 10th November.
- 3.6 At that meeting BCC officers put forward a proposal which included
- a proposal to focus on 10 blocks of identified streets based on the criteria outlined above (2 blocks per working day). These blocks of streets were aligned to bin collection days and were spread across the city.
 - Baseline measures and success rates to be measured by BCC
 - DFI to identify and measure key deliverables eg penalty notices issued etc
 - PSNI Neighbourhood Teams to be asked to have a presence in the area at the same time alongside DFI enforcement teams.
 - After an agreed period of time a review of the effectiveness of any interventions to be carried out
- 3.7 Initial feedback from DFI officials indicated that due to their own resource restrictions and other commitments that the size and timescales of the proposal might be difficult to support.
- 3.8 It was agreed that BCC officers would look at the scale of the proposal. Waste Collections Management teams have carried out further refinement and prioritisation based on their local knowledge and continued difficulty in accessing areas.
- 3.9 We are currently engaging with DFI Officers to arrange further meetings before the end of the calendar year. This engagement will focus on what can specifically be achieved given the Department's resource limitations, and to establish an action plan around introducing additional measures around enforcement as soon as is reasonably practicable.

- 3.10 Officers will continue to update the Committee on a regular basis with progress and proposals on this issue.

Financial and Resource Implications

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

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

- 3.12 There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.”

A Member expressed the need for DfI to fully participate as a partner to enable a successful pilot to be undertaken and also discussed those streets that continued to have issues but which currently did not have parking restrictions.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- noted the contents of the update report and agreed to write to DfI seeking its full participation as a partner to enable a suitable pilot to be undertaken; and
- agreed that officers would furnish the Members with a list of those streets that did not currently have parking restrictions but that repeatedly had problems with badly parked cars blocking access.

Applications for dual language street signs for Ballysillan Road, Ebor Street and Sunningdale Park North

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 To consider if a street survey of occupiers will be carried out for three applications for the erection of dual language street signs for a street within the city where potential adverse impacts have been identified and objections have been received from elected members.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider the report and objections raised in relation to the applications for dual language street signs received for Ballysillan Road, Ebor Street and Sunningdale Park North and either:

- a) Agree that surveys of occupiers of these streets be carried out.
or
- b) Agree that no surveys will be carried out on the grounds of the potential adverse impacts identified and these three applications are closed.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

- 3.1 The power for the Council to consider applications to erect a second street nameplate in a language other than English is contained in Article 11 of the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (NI) Order 1995.
- 3.2 The Dual Language Street Sign policy states that ‘each application will be subject to an initial assessment for any potential adverse impacts on equality, good relations and rural needs. This assessment will commence when the application is received and where any adverse impacts are identified that information will be brought to Committee.’
- 3.3 The initial assessments were carried out and potential adverse impacts were identified. Draft equality screenings were therefore carried out, assessing the request for dual language street signs in Ballysillan Road, Ebor Street and Sunningdale Park North for equality and good relations issues.
- 3.4 The screenings have identified that the carrying out of surveys and the erection of Irish language street signs in these areas could cause community tension, as outlined in the equality and good relation section below.

Objections to the applications were also raised by Elected Members.
- 3.5 Ballysillan Road - Oldpark DEA member Cllr Jordan Doran raised an objection stating ‘Ballysillan is an over-whelming Unionist community, and I have strong concerns that the proposal to add an Irish street name to Ballysillan Road would have a strongly negative impact on community relations within the area.’
- 3.6 Ebor Street – Botanic DEA Cllr Tracy Kelly raised an objection stating ‘We must not forget that this is a strong unionist community, and this will not be welcomed at all. My fear is that it will greatly impact community relations and cause upset when it is not necessary.’

- 3.7 Sunningdale Park North – An objection was raised to this application by Court DEA member Cllr Ron McDowell stating ‘The area has been settled for a few years now after some tensions around parading and flags etc. The flags having been curtailed and the parade passing quietly and peacefully again for the first time in a few years. This is a predominantly Unionist area and I do fear a tinderbox effect if these signs are to be erected where they are not wanted.’
- 3.8 While Councillor McDowell is not a DEA member for Castle in which this street falls, this objection has been included for consideration by committee.
- 3.9 These applications are therefore being brought to Committee to determine if surveys of residents of these streets will take place, considering this information.

Financial and Resource Implications

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

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

- 3.11 An EQIA was carried out on the main Dual Language Street Signs policy in 2021-22. This confirmed the initial assessment process to be carried out, which may indicate the requirement for equality screening.
- 3.12 The request for dual language street signs (in the Irish language) for Ballysillan Road, Ebor Street and Sunningdale Avenue were assessed for equality of opportunity and good relations issues and the applications for the streets were presented to Elected Members through the notification process. On this occasion objections were raised stating that due to the fact that these are Unionist communities the proposals may lead to a negative impact on community relations within these areas.
- 3.13 The applications were subjected to an initial Section 75 assessment to determine what impact the potential erection of dual language signs might have in the areas surrounding these streets. A full screening process was carried out to address the issues associated with carrying out a survey and the placing of street signs in these streets.
- 3.14 The draft screenings have identified that the carrying out of a survey in itself in these areas could cause community tension, as could the erection of the street sign and therefore has the potential

to cause an adverse impact on the grounds of good relations. It is acknowledged; however, the process could alternatively assist in promoting cultural and linguistic diversity.

- 3.15 Councillors Doran, Kelly and McDowell have raised potential for adverse impacts on good relations grounds through objections received during the Elected Member notification procedure as outlined above.
- 3.16 The council retains 'residual discretion' in relation to these applications. In effect this gives Elected Members the option to not proceed to survey and/ or halt the erection of an Irish language street sign in this street where, in the view of Elected Members taking into account the agreed criteria, that this action would be considered inappropriate."

Several Members addressed the Committee to outline their concerns regarding the potential adverse impacts that the erection of dual language signage would have on good relations within each of the proposed three areas.

Moved by Councillor Kelly,
Seconded by Councillor Cobain,

That no surveys be carried out on the grounds of the potential adverse impacts identified and that the three applications be closed.

Amendment

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

The Committee agrees to defer consideration of the decision on whether to carry out surveys of the occupiers of Ballysillan Road and Ebor Street until those applications already received to date had been processed and to proceed with a survey of the occupiers of Sunningdale Park North.

On a vote, 13 Members voted for the amendment and 5 against and it was declared carried.

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

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Signage at Finaghy Community Centre

At the request of Councillor Murray, the Committee agreed to the erection of additional signage by DfI for Finaghy Community Centre at Finaghy Road South, with the cost of approximately £500.00 to be met by the Council from existing budgets.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 5th December, 2023**

**Engagement with LCCC re residents in the
Colin area using the Cutts Recycling Centre**

At the request of Councillor M. Donnelly, the Committee agreed that officers would liaise with their counterparts in LCCC to discuss the potential of BCC ratepayers availing of the Cutts Recycling Centre, with a report to be submitted to a future meeting.

Chairperson

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City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 6th December, 2023

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nic Bhranair (Chairperson);
Alderman Lawlor;
Councillors Bunting, Canavan, Douglas,
Duffy, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Lyons,
Maskey, F. McAteer, McCabe, McCormick,
McDowell, I. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray
and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor McDonough-Brown.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 8th and 22nd 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.

Declarations of Interest

In relation to items 6.c) Vibrant Business Destinations Update and 6.d) Employability and Skills - Bridges to Progression Update, Councillor Duffy declared an interest, in that he worked for an organisation that was associated with the schemes and left the room whilst the items were being considered.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following four items was 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 items as, due to the nature of the item, 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.

Belfast Zoo Quarterly Update

The Committee noted the Zoo performance update report for the period July to September 2023 and agreed to write a letter of thanks to the animal care team in relation to the care they have provided for Delilah the gorilla, since her arrival at the Zoo in 1992.

Vacant to Vibrant Scheme Update

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and an overview of the recommendations from the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel following the recent receipt and assessment of applications.

The Committee:

- Noted the update in relation to the city centre Vacant to Vibrant Programme; and
- Agreed to the recommended grant awards as outlined within Section 3.15 of the report.

Quarter 2 Finance Update

The Quarter 2 financial position for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee was presented to Members, including a forecast of the year end outturn, a summary of the financial indicators and an executive summary.

The Committee noted the report and the associated financial reporting pack.

Markets Quarterly Update

The Director of Economic Development provided an update on city markets activity, including work being undertaken at St George's Market, as set out in the business plan.

During discussion, one Member questioned if a single use plastic policy at St. George's Market and the Christmas Market had been explored. The Director of Economic Development advised that this could be investigated.

In response to a Member's suggestion to celebrate the success of St. George's Market and its number of visitors, the Director of Economic Development advised that this could be discussed with the Communications Team.

The Committee noted the update on city markets and noted the progress against target on the St George's Market business plan that was previously agreed by this Committee in June 2023.

The Committee noted that the potential for a single use plastic policy at St. George's Market and the Christmas Market would be investigated and the findings submitted to a future Committee for consideration.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion - Regional Jobs and Investment Bill

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

“Belfast City Council:

Expresses grave concern at the significant geographic disparities in the economy of Northern Ireland between those areas which have experienced economic prosperity and those areas which have been left behind.

Recognises that of the ten of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland, six can be found in the Belfast City Council district.

Welcomes the publication of an action plan by Invest Northern Ireland (NI) to implement the recommendations of the recent review which revealed the scale of failure of Invest NI to work as a partner on a sub-regional basis.

Welcomes the proposal for legislation to address these regional economic imbalances through a Regional Jobs and Investment Bill.

Resolves to take all possible measures to alleviate regional economic imbalances in order to give every citizen equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of geography.

Commits to responding to the consultation on this legislation which is currently open.”

The Committee agreed that a report on how this would be facilitated, resourced and managed would be submitted to a future meeting.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Response to Department for Infrastructure Consultations

It was reported that the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) had issued a number of letters to the Council regarding various scheme designs or changes to legislation in relation to waiting restrictions on a number of streets following correspondence from Members. The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised that DfI had requested comment from Members prior to bringing these schemes forward and the notices had been shared on the Members portal on receipt.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 6th December, 2023**

During discussion, several Members welcomed the changes to the schemes and suggested additional comments to the consultation responses.

In relation to Montgomery Road, one Member questioned if the Cycle Lane covered the full length of the Road and if it was included in the Cycle Network Activity Plan. The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised this information would be confirmed.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the correspondence received from DfI as included within the Appendices A – E, in relation to Montgomery Road, Belmont Church Road, Dunville St, Sorella St, and Suffolk Road.
- Agreed the draft responses to the consultation letter in relation to the Montgomery Road Two Way Cycle Lane as included within Appendix A;
- Agreed the draft responses to the consultation letter in relation to the Belmont Church Road proposed imposition of waiting restrictions as included within Appendix B, with the additional request for waiting restrictions to also be imposed at the other end of the Belmont Road;
- Agreed the draft responses to the consultation letter in relation to the Dunville Street proposed imposition of waiting restrictions as included within Appendix C, with the additional request for resident's car parking schemes to be implemented;
- Agreed the draft responses to the consultation letter in relation to the Sorella St proposed imposition of waiting restrictions as included within Appendix D, with the additional request for resident's car parking schemes to be implemented; and
- Agreed the draft responses to the consultation letter in relation to the Suffolk Road proposed imposition of waiting restrictions as included within Appendix E.

Proposed Study Visits

The Director of City Regeneration and Development informed the Committee that approval was sought to in relation to extending the scope of previously approved study visit with a focus on regeneration projects, including city centre living and public private partnership approach to delivery.

She reminded the Committee that, in December 2021 following an invitation from Newcastle City Council to facilitate shared learnings around regeneration projects and good practice in city centre living, the Committee had agreed to a proposed study visit which was subject to restrictions at the time around travel and Covid – 19. Due to advice regarding the implementation of Covid restrictions at the time the study visit had to be postponed.

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She advised that officers had continued to engage with representatives from Newcastle and other Irish and UK cities, through existing fora such as UKReeIF / MIPIM, Urban Land Institute, and the Belfast City and Region Place Partnership. In addition to the planned visit to Newcastle, there had been ongoing contact with Greater Manchester and Leeds City Council. It was proposed to extend the scope of the previously approved study visit to include Greater Manchester and Leeds.

She highlighted that these visits would provide an opportunity to examine examples of housing led regeneration, institutional investor partnership approaches that these local authorities had taken to deliver regeneration as well as public private partnership approaches that support city centre living.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development pointed out that the proposed extended visit was considered timely given the commencement of the procurement process to seek a Private Sector Partner to deliver residential led, mixed use developments in the support of the growth ambitions as set out in the Belfast Agenda. While the core focus would be on city centre living and the institutional investor partnership / public private partnership approach to delivery of regeneration projects, it would also provide an opportunity to discuss other regeneration projects including City Deal, Innovation Districts and funding mechanisms available to support regeneration.

She advised that it was proposed that the visit would take place at the end of January / early February 2024, over 2 days (one overnight) for Party Group Leaders or their nominees and accompanying officers. She informed the Committee that it was estimated that a budget of up to £600 per person would be required for the proposed extended visit which would be met from existing budget.

The Committee:

- Agreed to extend the scope of a previously approved study visit to Newcastle to include other cities including Greater Manchester and Leeds which would focus on regeneration projects including city centre living and public private partnership approach to delivery; and
- Approved the attendance of Party Group Leaders or their nominees, accompanied by officers.

Positioning Belfast to Compete

A City Imagining - Cultural Strategy workplan – mid-year update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of a range of activity undertaken in since April 2023 to deliver on objectives of the ten-year cultural strategy, *A City Imagining*.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the work undertaken in the financial year to date
- Approve the allocation of £28,000 towards the Output Conference
- Agree to participate in Culture Commons, an open policy development programme that will run in partnership with UK based partners.
- Agree to the pilot micro-grant programme in collaboration with the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival (CQAF).

3.0 Main Report

3.1 In April 2023, members agreed the key actions in 2023/24 aligned to the implementation of year 4 of the Cultural strategy. Year 4 of the strategy has sought to combine cultural recovery with renewal in line with the commitments and priorities set out in A City Imagining.

3.2 Investing in the cultural sector

Similar to the Belfast Agenda, the investment model for culture includes a partnership approach to supporting the cultural sector, with the aim of sustaining and developing accessible cultural activity and infrastructure across Belfast. This investment is central to creating positive cultural, social and economic impacts for the city, delivering on our overall targets for the period, positioning Belfast as a regional driver, and creating the conditions for long-term transformation. The aims of the cultural investment model are to:

- support the cultural life of the city by enabling citizens to be active, dynamic and creative agents of change.
- invest in the cultural and creative sectors skills development and capacity for production and innovation.
- position Belfast as an international testing ground for new approaches to cultural engagement, development and placemaking.
- establish Belfast as a cultural destination.

3.3 The Culture Team manages a range of grant programmes and investment schemes for organisations and artists, totalling £3.04m funding through 117 awards. These schemes include:

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 6th December, 2023**

<u>Programme</u>	<u>Value</u>	<u>Number of awards/organisations supported</u>	<u>Status</u>
Cultural Multi-Annual Grant (CMAG)	£2.43million	36 Arts/ Heritage organisations 20 Festivals and Events organisations	Scoring and Moderation for 2024-28
Pathfinder Awards	£79,000	Four organisations	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Community Festivals Fund	69,000 + match funding from DFC	20 Community Festivals	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Arts and Heritage Grant	£133,244	17 Arts and Heritage Projects	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Access and Inclusion grants	Funding provided by Department for Communities	Two organisations supported	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants	£100,000	10 Artist Studios	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Creative Bursary Scheme for Individual Artists	£160,000	16 artists	Scored, awarded and contracts issued
Music Heritage Programme	£80,000	4-5 organisations	Launched October 2023

- 3.4 At the mid-way point in the year, work is complete with applications scored, moderated awarded and contracts issued to all core grant and investment schemes for 2023/24. The Music Heritage scheme will launch in October 2023. The next round of Cultural Multi-Annual Grants (CMAG), which will run from 2024 to 2028, received a total of 80 applications and officers are currently working to score and moderate this extensive programme. A report on recommendations for funding will be presented to members in January 2024.**

3.5 Strategic Partnerships

In addition to funding, Belfast City Council fulfils an important role in leading and supporting sectoral development initiatives. In 2023/24, this has included a range of strategic partnerships including:

- Arts and Business to support Blueprint for the Future, a financial resilience programme which supports a network of arts and cultural organisations to encourage income growth and long-term financial stability.
- A partnership with Theatre and Dance NI, including funding for 7 recipients, across various disciplines of the theatre and dance sector, as part of the first ever INVEST programme.
- Partnership with Craft NI to develop Craft NI Gallery including a programme of 8 craft exhibitions and 19 Belfast events for Craft Month.
- A partnership with Thrive NI to continue the Audience Panel, representing 200 members, and provide tailored advice to embedding people-led approaches within cultural organisations.
- A partnership with Ulster Architectural Heritage Society to deliver Open Heritage Belfast and other events, advocacy, advice & support.
- Funding for the Black Box to continue the Gig Buddies scheme which aims to increase participation and representation at cultural events by disabled people.
- A partnership with University of Atypical to promote accessibility in cultural spaces and support training for disability champions within the cultural sector.

3.6 Culture Commons

Belfast City Council has been invited to participate in Culture Commons, an open policy development programme that will run in partnership with UK based partners. This 12-month project will see a coalition of organisations from across local government, sector representative bodies, universities, arm's length bodies, and grant giving organisations coming together in a first-of-its-kind research and policy development programme. A collaborative, structured dialogue will explore how increased local decision making might affect the creative, cultural and heritage ecosystem and shape a suite of policy positions that could support a more equitable and sustainable cultural sector.

- 3.7 To ensure that the programme is drawing on the widest possible body of evidence, Culture Commons has invited Belfast City Council to contribute to the programme in partnership with the Department for Communities. Council officials will communicate good practice and involve other arts managers across NI (using established existing and new contacts and networks) in discussions related to the Culture Commons participation. This would ensure regional benefit and voice of other local councils across the province in this important new movement which promotes co-design, civic participation, and inclusive growth.
- 3.8 The cost for participation and benefits is £15,000 for one year (October 2023 – September 2024), with the Department for Communities contributing £10,000 and Belfast City Council (as lead) contributing £5,000. These costs will be met from the Belfast 2024 evaluation fund. This investment from BCC would be to build towards the legacy of the Belfast 2024 programme and support a more sustainable sector as we emerge from Belfast 2024.
- 3.9 Heritage
- As part of investment in heritage, officials continued its partnership with Ulster Architectural and Heritage Society on the delivery of Open Heritage Belfast. Taking place on 9th September, events included the Doorways Tell Stories project which explored the history and architecture that lies with the doorways of Belfast.
- 3.10 With a view to developing a heritage plan, members agreed to conduct a Heritage Audit and Roadmap for Development. The requirement of this contract will be to deliver part one of what is currently anticipated as a two-part project. Part one is defined as an audit of the heritage sector in Belfast and the design of a roadmap for development. The purpose of the development programme will be to set out a roadmap for Council to bring forward a more sustainable approach to supporting heritage in the city and the different strands of a work programme that should be taken forward including opportunities for co-design. Following delivery of these outputs it is envisaged that Council will progress with part two of the project which will be the development and delivery of the roadmap including designing action plans through a co-design process. This work is underway and is scheduled to be completed by March 2024.

3.11 Belfast Canvass and City Animation

Now in its fourth phase, officials are working on the delivery of the City Animation '*Belfast Canvas*' project. This phase will continue to expand into arterial routes across the city. The delivery of this phase is currently underway, and artists have been commissioned to transform over 20 spaces featuring local and international artists and many emerging artists. The public response to the finished boxes has been overwhelmingly positive. Work is due to be completed by November 2023.

3.12 Artist Studio and Creative Workspaces

In August 2023, members received an update on the completion of the 'Artist Studios and Maker Spaces Organisational Grants 2023/24' programme. Through this scheme, 10 organisations received financial support to develop and sustain their respective studio spaces.

3.13 In addition to the funding for artist studios, members agreed a strategic review of artist studios and maker-spaces in Belfast. This research study, which explores the current and future requirements of artist workspaces in Belfast, is led by Turley Communications and has involved extensive consultation with the sector, benchmarking and policy recommendations. To ensure alignment with other statutory partners, council officials have been working closely with the Arts Council NI in the development of this review. Officials are in receipt of the draft report and are currently working with the authors to refine the recommendations and actions arising from the data collected. The final report and recommendations will be brought to Committee in early 2024.

3.14 Sectoral Forums

Through its sector support programme, Council operates a number of sectoral Forums, namely Belfast Festivals Forum and Belfast Visual Arts Forum. The Festivals Forum is a proactive and voluntary collective of festival organisers and agencies. It is developing a coordinated approach to festivals by sharing ideas, skills training, marketing incentives and grants, and coordinating a festival events calendar. Meeting 8 times a year, the forum has welcomed peers and experts from international festivals.

The Belfast Visual Arts Forum promotes and celebrates Belfast as 'a city where visual arts can be embraced and

enjoyed by all’. There are currently over 60 members and key stakeholders. The forum has been going through significant transformation, welcoming two new Co-Chairs and renewing its aims and objectives whilst creating opportunities for those within the sector to contribute.

Priority 15 of *A City Imagining* has an emphasis on encouraging environmental responsibility and the role of culture in changing behaviours. To help build towards this goal, foster greater collaboration, and encourage best practice in the sector, a Green Arts Forum was established in August 2023 in partnership with other statutory and community stakeholders. This forum will meet on bi-monthly basis to promote and develop sustainability practice in the cultural sector.

3.15 Music Strategy

At a meeting of City Growth and Regeneration Committee in December 2022, members agreed the music strategy, ‘Music Matters: A Roadmap for Belfast’ including its corresponding priorities.

Members received updates and approved allocations of spend against various initiatives in April, June, August and September 2023. These commitments are now progressing at pace and include:

<u>Programme/Action</u>	<u>Status</u>
Recruitment and selection of the Belfast Region Music Board	Completed in April 2023
Expansion of the Output Conference, Ireland’s biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase	Completed in June 2023
Continuation of Gradam Ceoil bursaries	Launched in March 2023 and continuing to March 2024
The Pipeline Investment Fund for music venues through a partnership with Music Venue Trust	Completed in September 2023 with 5 Grassroots Music Venues in receipt of funding to upgrade equipment
Belfast Music marketing channels	New supplier appointed July 2023
Implementation of Access Riders to improve disability access	November to March 2023
The NI Music Prize	Taking place 15th November 2023

Creation of a digital music support service developed in collaboration with Music Connections	Launching in January 2024
Music Industry Mentoring Programme for 2023/24	Launching in January 2024
Programme to develop the production skills of women, female-identifying and non-binary music creators in a safe and trusted studio environment.	Launching in January 2024 until May 2024
Health and Wellbeing sessions for musicians and the industry	Launching in February 2023
'Go Green' toolkit with tangible recommendations and measures for implementation	Launching March 2023

3.16 Internship Programme

In August 2023, Members agreed to allocate £45,000 to the Music Matters Internship Programme, supporting 7 internships across the music industry in collaboration with CC Skills. This programme was developed and due to launch in November 2023. However, officials have been made aware that due to the loss of Arts Council England funding, CC Skills is winding down as an organisation across the UK. Officials are now exploring alternative routes and partners to deliver this important element of the music strategy.

3.17 International collaborations

As part of Belfast's application and status as a City of Music, member cities are committed to '*work internationally with the UNESCO Cities Network to deliver shared music, skills and learning opportunities.*'. Officials have focused on collaboration with two cities, namely Hannover in Germany (UNESCO City of Music since 2014) and London, Ontario (UNESCO City of Music since 2021).

3.18 In July 2023, the first stage of our UNESCO City of Music partnership with fellow UCoM city London, Ontario, took place. Belfast artists Ciara O'Neill and Niall McDowell, selected by London Music Office and festival lead Darin Addison, travelled to Canada for a week of experiences that will have a lasting impact upon their career and has cemented a strong relationship between our cities. In October 2023, artists from London, Ontario performed in the theatre at The Mac for Country Roads : An Evening of New Country Music at newly commissioned BCC UNESCO event with the Belfast International Arts Festival. This collaboration and event was featured on a range of media broadcasts including BBC Radio 4.

3.19 As part of the exchange with Hannover, Germany, Belfast based jazz artists Steve Davis and Scott Flanigan will travelled to Hannover to perform at Jazzwoche Festival on Saturday 14th October, facilitated by Moving On Music and Belfast City Council. Both musicians collaborated with musicians from the experimental orchestra, Tonhallenorchester, in advance of their performance.

3.20 City of Music Industry Sessions

Theme one of the Music Strategy focuses on the development of musicians, including action point 2.4 which seeks to ‘provide opportunities via events and programmes to provide regular access to professional associations in music to deepen existing relationships and create new ones’.

To build towards this wider goal of increasing networking and knowledge of the local sector, officials have developed the City of Music Industry Sessions, a series of free monthly information sessions for the local music community. Hosted in 2 Royal Avenue, this series features panel discussions and advice from experts across a range of disciplines, preceded by networking opportunities and advice clinics hosted by the Culture Team. Each event offers learning opportunities for both the music creators and music industry personnel to ensure development of both in tandem. Events have included:

- **Getting Tracks Played on the Radio - Rory McConnell (Senior Content Producer at BBC), Gemma Bradley (Host of Radio 1's BBC Introducing Show) Siobhan Brown (Former host of the Siobhan Brown Soul Show on Radio Ulster, Founder of Soultrane Festival)**
- **Content Creation and Audience Building with Fiona McAuley (Head of Audience at Atlantic Records) and Saul Duffin (Founder of Yeo Magazine)**
- **Can Live Music Pay The Bills?’ Featuring Matt Hanner (Runway Artists) Alexandra Ampofo (Metropolis Music & Women Connect) Ciaran Lavery (Artist / Songwriter) Paula McColl (Moving on Music)**
- **Learning from Hannover, UNESCO City of Music**
- **Paul Charles - Music industry expert, booking agent (Tom Waits & more)**
- **Amazon Global #1 Bestseller Emily White on How to Build a Sustainable Music Career (And Collect All Revenue Streams. This event is featured as part of the Sound of Belfast programme.**

3.21 Micro Grants

In April 2023, members agreed an allocation of £20,000 towards a micro-grant programme, available to individual

musicians, to assist with costs incurred within their artform. In a similar manner to the partnership with Music Venue Trust, where Council has collaborated with an industry expert to augment a pre-existing support scheme, it is proposed to pilot this first micro-grant programme in collaboration with the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival (CQAF).

3.22 The CQAF Bursary scheme is a hugely popular initiative which supports and encourages new work by visual artists, comedians, musicians and theatre practitioners. It is often dominated by applications from musicians, and it is proposed to add an extra music specific micro-grant to enhance this programme. It is proposed to launch this pilot in December 2023 with musicians receiving up to £1000 towards elements such as:

- Session musician fees
- Recording (studio hire, engineering, mixing, mastering)
- Content creation (video, audio, promotional photography, artwork, design, etc)
- Manufacture and distribution
- Merchandise (design and production)
- PR & Marketing

3.23 Output Conference Update

Established in 2016, Output Belfast has earned its reputation over the last 7 years as Ireland's biggest one-day music conference and live music showcase. Delivered as a key event within the City of Music programme, the conference features a full programme of panels, workshops and conferences, followed by an evening showcase of live music for free to the public. Activity includes music and creative digital showcasing and networking events, business development panels and workshops and meetings and networking with key international creative digital companies,

As part of our commitment to priority 2.5 within the music strategy, which reads 'Develop regular music business touchpoints throughout the year using existing conferences to offer more regular but bitesize opportunities for micro learning'. In line with previous years, it is proposed to allocate £28,000 to Score Draw Music to continue the delivery of the Output Conference in April 2024. This investment will be enhanced through support from Arts Council NI and is met with existing budgets allocated to music development.

3.24 Finance and Resource Implications

There are no new financial implications. The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the 2023/24 budget for the Culture and Tourism section of the Economic Development division of the Place and Economy Departmental budget in line with existing approvals.

3.25 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The cultural strategy, *A City Imagining* has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) and a Rural Needs Assessment (RNA). Specific initiatives as required will be subject to a further equality screening.”

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development confirmed that the Cultural/Music Development officer liaised with applicants regarding the grant programme application process.

In response to a Member’s question in relation to the locations across the city of the three previous phases of the City Animation “Belfast Canvas” project, the Director of Economic Development advised that this information could be provided.

The Committee:

- Noted the work which had been undertaken in the financial year to date;
- Approved the allocation of £28,000 towards the Output Conference;
- Agreed to participate in Culture Commons, an open policy development programme that would run in partnership with UK based partners;
- Agreed to the pilot micro-grant programme in collaboration with the Cathedral Quarter Arts Festival (CQAF); and
- Noted that a location breakdown of the three previous phases of the City Animation “Belfast Canvas” project would be provided to the Committee in due course.

Belfast Bikes Scheme - Quarterly Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To update Members on the performance of the Belfast Bikes scheme in quarter two (1st July 2023 - 30th September 2023) of year 8 of operation.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- note the update of the Belfast Bikes performance for Y8 Q2 (July-September); financial year
- note the update to the notice of motion regarding free access for young people;
- note the progress regarding phase one and phase two expansion.
- note the update that tender will be prepared for a procurement of a new Public Bike Hire Scheme
- note an Expression of Interest has been circulated for a new sponsor for the Public Bike Hire Scheme

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background

The Belfast Bikes scheme was launched in 2015 as part of Belfast City Council's physical investment programme. The Department for Regional Development provided initial capital funding for the scheme as part of their Active Travel Demonstration Projects budget. The scheme launched with a network of 30 docking stations and 300 bikes. The scheme has been operated by NSL continually since inception using bikes and supporting infrastructure from 'Nextbike by TIER'. The scheme currently operates with 588 (including those in reserve for new stands) and 56 docking stations.

3.2 Expansion of the Scheme

At CG&R on 12 May 2021 it was agreed that an additional four Belfast Bikes docking stations would be deployed using DFI Active Travel funding. All stations below are now operational

- Lisnasharragh Leisure Centre
- Olympia Leisure Centre
- Kennedy Centre
- Waterworks

3.3 At CG&R on 9 June 2021 it was agreed to proceed with an additional 15 docking stations. At SP&R on 18 June 2021 members agreed for £980,000 to be invested in the expansion proposal (£480,000 non-recurrent funding for Belfast Bikes expansion and £500,000 non-recurrent reallocated from public space programme).

3.4 Works are ongoing for the design and installation of eight stations in Phase 1 (to be installed throughout 2023):

- North: Shore Road - complete & operational
- West: Coláiste Feirste – complete & operational
- South: Malone Road (Elms Village) - complete & operational
- East: Castlereagh Road – complete & operational
- North: Yorkgate – on hold due to train station construction
- West: Glencairn Park – to be installed in Autumn 2023
- South: Lisburn Road (Drumglass Park)- to be installed in Autumn 2023
- East: Upper Newtownards Road (Sandown Carpark) – to be installed late 2023

3.5 There are plans for seven further stations in Phase 2 in year 2023/24. Planning for those are on hold as officers are currently preparing documents for a tender process to appoint a new provider/operator. Locations for the seven stations will be identified and brought back to the AWG and to be implemented in the new scheme.

3.6 Operational Performance

Availability

Following the ongoing challenges sourcing replacement bike parts, this issue has now been resolved and the number of bikes on the street during Q2 has increased. The average daily bikes on the street during Q2 was 385

3.7 An additional 180 bikes have been purchased to facilitate the ongoing docking station expansion, and this stock has been filtered onto the street, so availability levels have further increased.

3.8 Membership

There were 26,974 registered Belfast Bike users at the end of Q2. This is a 19% increase of users from the previous quarter. Nextbike by Tier the current provider changed their payment operator during Q4 (2022-2023) and as such the details of non-active members are no longer recorded as registered users. Going forward all active users will need to update their information with the new supplier.

- In Q2 'Pay as you go' (PAYG) memberships remained the most popular form of membership, accounting for 83.5% of users.
- Annual memberships accounted for 15% of users. There is an ongoing trend of users switching from annual membership to PAYG.
- Casual memberships have greatly reduced, accounting for just over 1% of memberships, due to the introduction of PAYG.

3.9 Journeys

There have been 1,422,196 journeys since the scheme was launched including 36,043 journeys during Q2 Year 8.

This is a decrease of 36% from the same period in Year 7 (which was a very busy year for the scheme) and also 12% lower than with the 5-year average for Q2.

3.10 Vandalism

Members will be aware that vandalism is an ongoing problem. Upgrades to the forks to help prevent the unauthorised removal of bikes has been successful however, damage is now being caused to the rear wheels and to the docking points while bikes are being forced from docking stations.

3.11 There were 299 instances of vandalism in Q2. This is much higher than in previous periods and higher than the quarterly average by 54%. Vandalism costs payable by the Council for this period is £12,838 Whilst this figure is significantly lower than the same period last year it is higher than the quarterly average (£3,689).

3.12 Members should note that generally the number of vandalism incidents had increased in recent times. However, Members should also note that following the upgrade to 'SMART' bikes, the amount of theft has decreased due to GPS tracking in the bike allowing for recovery. The operator is very proactive at retrieving missing bikes.

3.13 The bikes operator continues to deliver operational improvements and community engagement initiatives with PSNI to help decrease vandalism incidents.

3.14 Subscriptions and Usage Revenue

Income from fees and charges YTD is £67,958. This is 57% lower than estimated for this period and is partly due to

change of payment provider and associated issues and the fact that there currently is no sponsor for the Bike Share Scheme.

3.15 MARCOMMS

Marketing activity during Q2 included:

- Promotion of a specially animated & fun Belfast Bikes video – promoting the different docking stations across the city. This was promoted on Belfast City Council and Belfast Bikes social media channels.
- Promotion of newly installed docking stations on social media channels
- Social media messaging on the new Belfast Bike branding of other council assets e.g. Belfast Castle, 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast Zoo, St George’s Market

Belfast Bikes currently has 5k followers on Twitter; 1.8k on Facebook; and 1.1k on Instagram.

3.16 Operator contract

NSL continues to operate the Belfast Bikes scheme until March 2024. Council staff have reviewed the scheme and a recent Expression of Interest (EOI) was completed as a market testing exercise. This is used to inform the next stage of the tender process. It is suggested to brief parties about the main specifications of the tender documents before it will be published.

3.17 Sponsorship

Sponsorship has ended and council officers released an Expression of Interest (EOI) seeking a sponsor for the scheme. This process is currently ongoing.

3.18 Response to Notice of Motion

Following a Notice of Motion from Councillor O’Hara the Committee agreed on 4th March 2020 to investigate ‘*as part of the current strategic review of the Belfast Bikes Scheme, consideration be given to granting free access to young people 25 years of age and under to the scheme*’.

3.19 Belfast Bikes operator, NSL, added date of birth (D.O.B.) as an essential criterion for users from 13 October 2022. From this data we now know that the majority of Belfast Bike users fall within the ‘25 and under’ age group.

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3.20 From (October 22 – June 23), the 16 – 25 age group accounted for 52% of users across the scheme.

3.21 If free usage was implemented for under 25's- then it would have resulted in a loss of income for the current financial year and previous 3 years as per the table below.

	<u>Year 20 / 21</u>	<u>Year 21 / 22</u>	<u>Year 22 / 23</u>	<u>Forecasted</u> <u>23 / 24</u>
Loss 52% of bike usage revenue	£70,205	£177,901	£91.609	£72,169

3.22 At its meeting in September 2023, the Committee considered an update on the Motion. Furthermore, the Committee agreed that it would consider this as part of the rate setting process for 2024/25 and to write to the Department for Infrastructure and the Department of Health to request investment in this proposal, to be delivered on an annual basis.

3.23 A response was received from the Department for Infrastructure advising that the operation of the Belfast Bikes scheme is a matter for council. However, if DFI was to consider future capital investment, they would seek assurance that the operation of the Belfast Bike Scheme remains sustainable.

3.24 Financial & Resource Implications

Finance

Providing free usage to under 25's is likely to have a significant detrimental impact on revenue generated from the bike scheme, which directly contributes to its operating costs and sustainability.

3.25 Members are asked to confirm if they wish the additional financial allocation to cover the loss of revenue to be considered as part of the rate setting process however members are advised that any financial implications, from any

decision, have not yet been factored into the current rate setting process.

Equality or Good Relations Implications

None.”

During discussion, the Director of Economic Development explained further the need to decrease vandalism, the potential location of a new cycle stand at Sandown Road, and confirmed that a map of the cycle lanes across the city would be provided to the Committee.

In relation to Members concerns regarding the impact of the Expression of Interest which had been circulated for a new sponsor for the Public Bike Hire Scheme, the Director of Economic Development clarified the process and advised that an update could be provided once this had been completed.

Regarding the update on the Motion to consider free access to young people 25 years of age and under to the scheme. One Member pointed out that it had been agreed by the Committee, at its meeting in September, that the Committee would consider this as part of the rate setting process for 2024/25. One Member requested that financial information be provided regarding the Bikes Scheme revenue, the outcome of the Sponsorship, and the potential impact of the motion to inform the rate setting priorities.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the update of the Belfast Bikes performance for Y8 Q2 (July-September); financial year;
- Noted the update to the notice of motion regarding free access for young people;
- Noted the progress regarding phase one and phase two expansion;
- Noted the update that tender will be prepared for a procurement of a new Public Bike Hire Scheme;
- Noted that an Expression of Interest had been circulated for a new sponsor for the Public Bike Hire Scheme and agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting regarding the outcome and financial impact; and
- Noted that a map of the cycle lanes across the city would be provided to the Committee.

Tourism Strategy Consultation Response

The Committee was reminded that the Department for the Economy (DfE) had opened consultation on its Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland on the 6th November which would close on the 12th January, 2024.

The Director of Economic Development explained that the draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland was a 10 year plan that set out DfE’s vision and mission for the growth

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of the tourism sector in Northern Ireland over the next decade. It sought to help position the region internationally as an attractive place to visit, making visitors feel welcome while at the same time helping to make the lives better of all of our citizens. It sought to deliver on the objectives of 10x by generating economic growth that was sustainable, inclusive and innovative.

He advised that, since the publication of the 10x strategy, the Department had been working to consider how the practical implementation of overarching objectives set out in the 10X Economic Vision was to be achieved. It has issued a number of related documents such as the Skills Strategy (Skills for a 10X Economy) and had been working on appropriate metrics to track progress. He informed the Committee that the Tourism Strategy was a continuation of this delivery and remained aligned to the proposal of DfE investment to be aligned with activity that supported the 10x ambition.

He highlighted that the draft Tourism Strategy identified the key challenges and opportunities for growth and was premised on five themes and sought to strive for a new and ambitious growth trajectory that was:

- Innovative and uses our creative skills;
- Inclusive by bringing opportunities for all;
- Sustainable for generations;
- Attractive to visitors and investors; and
- Collaborative to deliver a shared vision.

He stated that the Department now requested that all interested parties consider the draft proposals for growth in the tourism sector and saw this as an opportunity to help shape the final strategy and next steps.

The Director of Economic Development advised that a summary of the five questions posed and draft responses to each of these had been collated and were attached in [Appendix 1](#) for the Committee to review and confirm their agreement for submission to DfE, subject to any other matters that they wished to incorporate.

He explained that, from the perspective of the Council, the fact that the regional government department with responsibility for economic growth had identified the role that Tourism plays as an economic driver that could be delivered for visitors and citizens alike was welcome. As a result, the tone of the draft response was to recognise and support the need for an innovative and collaborative tourism strategy and sector. However, the response also suggested that there was a more effective mechanism for achieving this, namely, to utilise the data, insights and structures that already existed at local level and to identify greater opportunities for collaborative working that took cognisance of cross cutting objectives and shared resources, that focused efforts and facilitated effective delivery.

During discussion, one Member highlighted the importance of Neighbourhood Tourism and suggested it's inclusion in the response to align with the Council's strategy.

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The Committee noted the contents of report and agreed the draft response to the consultation as set out in Appendix 1, with the additional request to emphasis neighbourhood tourism.

Update on the Fleadh Cheoil

The Director of Economic Development provided an update on the ongoing Fleadh bid work and requested associated budget.

He stated that, in recent weeks, officers had developed an updated edition of the Fleadh Cheoil bid book and this would accompany the Council’s Expression of Interest for the 2025 event, which must be with the Fleadh Executive Office in Dublin by 15th December, 2023.

He advised that this updated iteration had been consolidated by feedback received on our previous submissions – and it now included an English version with Irish language headings, a separate full Irish language version and additional content inserted on Accessibility and Sustainability (as per previous bid submission feedback from Comhaltas).

He reminded the Committee that, at its meeting in June, it had approved officers to continue with the bid process for future years, approved the budget for 2023-24 associated with the bid process (including attendance of a delegation at each event including attendance by Lord Mayor at the Fleadh Cheoil in Mullingar in August) and noted the costs associated with bid activity for 2024-25 and 2025-26.

He pointed out that, since then, the 2024 / 2025 calendar of Fleadh related events had become available as follows:

Comhaltas HQ Christmas Dinner 2023	Dublin	Saturday 9 December 23	Lord Mayor, Chief Executive, Director
Ulster Convention	Dun Uladh Centre, Omagh	Sunday 18 February 24	Director, Senior Manager
GB Convention	London	Friday 1 – Sunday 3 March 24	Senior Manager
HQ Comhaltas Congress	Sligo	4 – 5 May	Director
US Convention	Buffalo, New York	4 – 7 April 2024	Director
All Ireland Fleadh	Wexford	4 – 12 August 2024	Lord Mayor, Chief Executive, Director, Senior Manager and various Officers (tbc)
Comhaltas HQ Christmas Dinner 2024	Dublin	<i>Possibly Saturday 7 December 24 (tbc)</i>	Lord Mayor, Director and various Officers (tbc)

The table also illustrates which events the Lord Mayor and other Council officials might need to attend.

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The Director of Economic Development highlighted that officers were now seeking permission to send the Lord Mayor and appropriate officers to these events as detailed. He highlighted that attendance was important to demonstrate the ongoing commitment from the Council and Ards Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCE) to securing Fleadh Cheoil. In particular, it was critical that approval was provided promptly to allow travel arrangements to be booked as soon as possible for the US Convention in Buffalo, New York in early April 2024 (which was within the first week of the new financial year). This would ensure optimum value for money in the booking process and to allow for synergy between the travel plans of the Council's delegation and that of Ards CCE. For the appropriate Director detailed as above, costs were expected to be circa £2,500 for attendance at the US Convention.

He explained that the in-year Events Development Budget (£40,000) had to-date covered the costs of the Ards Letter of Offer in-year, and other Fleadh bid book work to date including translation, design and print costs. In addition, members agreed to provide a Eurovision event in Belfast in May from this budget line. While some budget remained (circa £7,000), a full Fleadh Executive visit was also planned for Belfast within the first financial quarter of 2024, which needed to be accounted for in budget profiling.

The Director of Economic Development advised that the Committee was requested to consider approval for the additional budget required to accommodate the arrangements for the US Convention in - year to a value of £2,500.

In relation to Ards CCE, the Committee was reminded that under the conditions of the current in-year Funding Agreement with Ards CCE, the branch were responsible for making their own travel and accommodation arrangements. This included the US Convention at the beginning of April 2024. Officers were working with Finance and Legal to ensure the early release of appropriate funds from the 2024/2025 financial year were processed to enable flights and accommodation bookings to proceed (circa £22k).

The Committee noted the contents of report and approved that the budget from 2024/25 financial year be used to accommodate the arrangements for the US Convention in April 2024.

Growing Business and the Economy

**Building an inclusive labour market –
research and event update**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on plans for a conference to take place on 22 January 2024. The conference will focus on how to make the labour market more inclusive – with a particular focus on addressing economic inactivity.**

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Note the report including details of the planned 22 January 2024 event focusing on inclusive labour markets
- Promote the event to key contacts in their networks in order to ensure a wide representation and discussion at the event.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Members will be aware that funding for projects and organisations working with those who are economically inactive were significantly impacted with the cessation of EU funds. Traditionally, this work had been resourced through European Social Fund (ESF) funding. This concluded in March 2023. The replacement funding – Shared Prosperity Fund – does include a theme which focuses on People and Skills. The most significant element of this funding – around £50million – has been set aside for projects which focus on addressing economic inactivity. 18 projects were awarded funding for delivery through to March 2025 (from April 2023). 13 of these projects are based in Belfast (but some have regional coverage).

3.2 As these projects mobilise for delivery, there are concerns around the sustainability of the funding model (which will run out in just over a year from now) as well as the ability of those projects, alone, to address a long-standing structural issue in the local labour market.

3.3 In Belfast, economic inactivity presents a significant challenge for the city. The current economic inactivity rate for Belfast is around 29% - slightly ahead of the regional average. There are a number of reasons why people are economically inactive: students are counted among this figure as are those with caring responsibilities (looking after the family and home), health reasons and early retirees. While the inactivity rate is high, the overall unemployment rate for the region has decreased to an all-time low: figures for November 2023 show it sitting around 2.1%. What this means is that employers are competing within a limited talent pool. However the inactivity rate has never seen any real improvement over many decades – regardless of the prevailing economic climate and employment/unemployment rate.

- 3.4** In more recent times, there has been a wider discourse around what solutions are needed to address the challenges of economic inactivity. This is a very complex problem that will require a multi-faceted solution involving partners across many areas including health; skills support; economic development; social security and childcare support.
- 3.5** While DfC retains the policy remit for this area of work, the input from a wider number of partners means that sustainable solutions that make an impact can only be found if all partners get behind the issue and make long-term commitments in this space.
- 3.6** One of the reflections that we have identified is the absence of a clear understanding of the scale, nature and scope of the challenge. This inhibits the ability to have an informed discussion on potential solutions. In recognition of this, under the banner of the Belfast Labour Market Partnership, officers are planning to host an event at Ulster University's Belfast campus on 22 January 2024 entitled: Inclusive Labour Markets: Opportunities, Challenges and Solutions.
- 3.7** The aim of the conference is to facilitate discussion and instigate actions which can address economic inactivity and champion inclusive employment, stimulate an informed discussion of the need for and value of creating a more inclusive labour market and work towards a coherent solution that can improve outcomes for citizens and support a more competitive and productive economy.
- 3.8** The objectives of the event are to:
- Establish a shared understanding of the nature and scale of economic inactivity across the region
 - Establish a critical analysis of challenges and solutions within 'the system'
 - Develop a shared understanding of what is possible and what could be achieved through collaboration
 - Provide opportunities to learn from best practice, exchange knowledge and share ideas for the future
 - Identify key steps require to move towards a sustainable solution.
- 3.9** The conference is intended to act as an opener for a much wider discussion on this issue. This is particularly important given the pending funding end-date in March 2025 and the need to ensure that a well-considered solution in developed and resourced to take over at that point.

- 3.10 Aligning with key policy and strategic priorities, including the Belfast Agenda, the Inclusive Growth Strategy, Levelling Up and 10X, the programme will include opportunities for discussions on a range of issues such as:**
- **Opportunities for greater engagement between health and employment support services**
 - **Potential implications of further welfare reform**
 - **Re-skilling and upskilling support to encourage labour market participation and progress**
 - **A future investment model that can make an impact.**
- 3.11 A draft agenda can be found in Appendix 1. This is still in development and is subject to further changes as we work through it with our partner organisations.**
- 3.12 The target audience for the event will include:**
- **Employer/business organisations: Chambers of Commerce, FSB, CBI, Software Alliance, CITB, NISCC etc. as well as local enterprise agencies and anchor institutions such as Belfast HSC Trust, Belfast Harbour**
 - **Government departments and agencies responsible for policy, commissioning and delivery: Department for Communities, Department for the Economy, NI Skills Council, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Department for Health, Public Health Agency, Department of Justice, The Executive Office**
 - **Labour Market Partnerships (LMPs) across the region**
 - **Employability and skills providers and representative/support groups such as NICVA, UKSPF projects, Apprenticeships NI providers, FE colleges, Belfast Area Partnerships, VCSE panel, advice sector etc.**
 - **Other key stakeholders within the employability and skills field such as RSA, Institute for Employment Studies, IPPO, QUB, UU, ERSI, The Law Centre etc.**
 - **Academic input through universities, colleges and research institutes.**
- 3.13 In order to set the scene and ensure that the discussion is grounded in research and analysis, Ulster University's Economic Policy Centre (EPC) team will undertake research in advance of the conference and this will be shared on the day. This research will focus on:**
- **Context and background: high level long-term trends in economic inactivity, identifying the social and economic implications, backdrop of demographic and labour shortage challenges, importance and**

success of third sector in working with key marginalised groups and need for creative solutions

- Understanding the economically inactive: outlining definitions, levels and rates of inactivity in Belfast/NI, overview of headline reasons for inactivity
- Medium term and post-pandemic picture: reasons for inactivity both medium term and post-pandemic; long-term sick (e.g. benefit system, reasons for sickness, severity of conditions, increased waiting lists, etc.), looking after family home (e.g. women overrepresented in unpaid labour, lack of flexibility in positions across all sectors/occupations, affordable childcare etc.), early retirees (e.g. 'great resignation' post-pandemic but broader need to retain older workers) and other
- Geographic concentration: outline the spatial composition of inactivity, highlighting inner city areas that perform particularly poorly on multiple economic indicators (e.g. inactivity, employment deprivation, multiple health conditions, poverty) and how these indicators link together to form at times entrenched concentrations over many years
- Demand-side insights: understanding where jobs are likely to come from; in what numbers; what skills levels they will require – and thinking about potential impacts for engaging those not currently actively engaged in the labour market
- Policy and employer solutions: begin to identify policy solutions and the need for creativity, including third-sector cooperation, cross-departmental approaches and employer engagement.

3.14 There will also be a contribution from Tony Wilson who leads up the Brighton-based think tank Institute for Employment Studies (IES) and who is currently working on the Commission for the Future of Employment Support. Tony has worked at the heart of UK government on a range of labour market and skills issues and has particular expertise in labour market policy and analysis, the design, delivery and evaluation of employment and skills programmes and supporting organisations to understand and apply evidence of 'what works' in employment policy and service delivery. Tony was part of the team that developed the Employability NI model which had, at its core, the Labour Market Partnerships structure so he is very familiar with the Northern Ireland landscape.

3.15 The event will also include an input from Andy Haldane, Chief Executive of RSA and former Chief Economist at the Bank of England. Belfast City Council has been working closely with

the RSA over a number of years on projects such as Digital Badging.

3.16 It is hoped that the conference can act as the start of a conversation about what needs to change to create the best conditions for achieving an inclusive labour market. It is expected that it will lead to further cross-sector engagement in order to drill into this complex issue and to try to identify sustainable solutions that can start to make an impact on what has been an intractable challenge for many decades. This has been identified as a priority area of work in the refresh of the Belfast Agenda.

3.17 **Financial and Resource Implications**

Funding for the event has been set aside within existing Employability and Skills and Labour Market Partnership budgets already approved by this committee. Ulster University is making the venue available free of charge.

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

The outcomes of this event are to try to identify solutions that can have a positive impact on equality and good relations as well as addressing other economic and social challenges. The event will include invitees from all across the region.”

The Committee:

- Noted the report including details of the planned 22nd January 2024 event focusing on inclusive labour markets; and
- Agreed to promote the event to key contacts in their networks in order to ensure a wide representation and discussion at the event.

Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Partnership Agreement approval

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in March, it had received an update on progress to support the development of the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor including work on the strategy and action plan. The plan aimed to support sustainable economic growth across the region, identifying areas of focus for the partnership to address future opportunities and seeking to address any gaps in existing provision.

The vision of the strategy was to become a leading economic corridor in Europe, achieving sustainable growth through collaborative research and development, a highly skilled workforce and enabling infrastructure. This included an ambition to be world renowned as a major international centre in growth sectors such as Professional Services, Advanced Manufacturing, ICT and Life and Health Sciences.

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The action plan outlined key pillars to support effective delivery, including ways of working, governance and resourcing, and communication and marketing. Priority actions to date included:

- Staffing: in line with recommendations under the strategy, two full time staff members, a Programme Manager and Project Officer were recruited in Summer 2023. The staff were based at Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and operate across the partnership;
- Management and governance: Dates had been agreed until September 2024 for regular meetings of the partnership governance structure, including monthly meetings at Director level, bi-monthly among CEOs and quarterly meetings for elected representatives. A new Collaboration and Funding Agreement had been prepared to further clarify areas of co-operation and partnership working and to confirm the budget profile for 2024;
- Communications: DBEC was developing a coherent marketing and communications strategy in line with the strategic objectives. The team would work with an external communications partner to support delivery;
- Engagement: Given that the Partnership now had dedicated resources in place, the team was working on a stakeholder engagement framework that would identify priority linkages, aligned to the action plan. The Team was already engaging in key meetings and this work would continue in order to further shape the programme of activity;
- Research: The immediate focus on research included a review of existing skills strategies, identifying gaps, barriers and opportunities for co-operation. The DBEC staff had also participated in consultation around research commissioned by the Shared Island Unit in relation to the all-island labour market and were exploring opportunities for engagement in Peace Plus projects in this area of work; and
- Funding: The Irish Government's Shared Island initiative aimed to harness the full potential of the Good Friday Agreement to enhance cooperation, connection and mutual understanding on the island and engage with all communities and traditions to build consensus around a shared future. The DBEC Partnership was successful in an application for Shared Island funding to carry out a feasibility study into regional innovation hubs within the partnership area. This work would conclude in early December and relevant findings would be brought back to this committee for information.

The Committee was reminded that, as part of the governance structure for the partnership, there were 24 councillors on a Political Advisory Group (3 nominees from each council area) and the Council nominees were Councillors Bunting, Hanvey and R. McLaughlin. Nominees were appointed for a two-year period, with a view to participating in quarterly meetings. The most recent meeting of the group took place in

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September 2023 hosted by Dublin City University. The next meeting was expected to take place at the Ulster University Belfast Campus in December 2023.

The development of a new Collaboration and Funding Agreement was recommended as part of previous work to strengthen and clarify the governance and management arrangements for the Partnership. A draft document was prepared by the DBEC secretariat and had been reviewed by council officers ([Appendix 1](#)).

He explained that the Agreement sets out the detailed workings of the collaborative partnership between the 8 partner councils and the 2 universities. Newry Mourne and Down District Council had agreed to undertake the role of Lead Council on behalf of and with the agreement of the other Collaborating Members. The Lead Council would continue to administer the DBEC resource team and would request and co-ordinate input from the Collaborating Members as and when required. The Lead Council would also provide accounting and financial management for the partnership and would be responsible for procurement.

It was reported that the Political Advisory Group (PAG), Chief Executive Officers (CEO) Steering Group and Directors Steering Group would oversee programme delivery and review performance against the DBEC Strategy and the Action Plan.

The Committee:

- Noted the progress on the development of the DBEC initiative; and
- Approved the Collaboration and Funding Agreement as outlined at Appendix 1.

Vibrant Business Destinations Update

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in November 2022, it had agreed a new investment approach to support local business associations to develop and deliver interventions to drive footfall and create vibrancy in those areas.

The overarching purpose of the pilot initiative was to strengthen the competitiveness of our local business destinations, focusing on actions which aim to:

- Support the development of shared and safely accessible commercial areas;
- Support the diversification of business destinations outside of the city centre;
- Bring together key stakeholders to benefit business destinations outside of the city centre; and
- Improve the quality of urban design, distinctiveness, and townscape quality.

The Committee was also reminded that the pilot was developed in response to feedback from a range of businesses and traders' associations across the city regarding drop off in footfall and a challenging operating environment post-Covid. Through engagement with the Department for Communities (DfC), an opportunity was identified to

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secure resources through the DfC Revitalisation programme. The concept for the “Vibrant Business Destinations” (VBD) intervention was identified as a pilot programme in keeping with work undertaken by the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) to develop a “Living High Street Toolkit”. The Council successfully secured funding of £475,000 from the Department for Communities (DfC). The Council also provided match funding to enable the delivery of advice and support to extend the scope of the scheme. VBD was intended to complement a wider programme of support and activity that was taking place within the city centre, including the Vacant to Vibrant Support Programme and previous business support interventions through the Covid Revitalisation Programme.

The Director of Economic Development advised that the pilot initiative aimed to support up to 10 business associations to a maximum of £40,000 each for expenditure on a range of eligible activities. The objectives were to:

- Increase engagement and partnership working between statutory partners and local business associations;
- Support the development of area-based actions plans which address specific local concerns and deliver specific, measurable benefits over the short/medium and long term;
- Increase footfall and sales as a direct result of marketing and promotional activity; generate new customers or sustaining customer loyalty through increasing sales revenue, increasing the number of new customers or developing repeat business;
- Enhance the profile of the area with a view to stimulating economic activity;
- Support the growth and development of businesses engaged in associated activity; and
- Support the sustainability of businesses and local business associations.

He explained that the initiative operated via a two-stage application process and that basic eligibility criteria included:

- Groups or established associations must be led by the business community (including social enterprises and cooperatives) to address locally based issues and be committed to becoming a constituted association;
- Groups or established associations must be made up of retail/hospitality/consumer facing businesses located on road frontage/local high streets;
- The priority focus is on arterial routes and routes with a minimum number of 15 confirmed businesses located on road frontage;
- Group membership should be representative of the businesses in the eligible area – both by volume and by business type; and
- Business membership must represent predominantly owner-occupiers and independent traders, however, it could involve representation from community organisations.

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He informed the Committee that there were 48 initial Expression of Interest (Eol) requests covering the following areas: East Belfast: Eastside Partnership, Ballyhackamore, Cregagh and Woodstock Roads, Newtownards Road, Tullycarnett, The Mount, Albert Bridge, Castlereagh Place, Belmont Road, Kings Square and Gilnahirk, Castlereagh Road, Holywood Arches. South Belfast: Forward South Partnership Board, Lower Ormeau Road, Crescent Arts, Malone Road. West Belfast: West Belfast Partnership Board, Falls, Springbank Industrial Estate, Blackstaff Mill, Andersonstown Road. North Belfast: Cliftonville Circus, Lower Antrim Road, Cavehill Road, Argyle Business Park. Other: City Centre Management, Dundonald.

He highlighted that many of the original requests had failed to meet the funding criteria or the initial enthusiasm of groups or individuals diminished over time, while others couldn't garner enough local business support to formally apply. From the original 48 requests, ten groups were now currently being supported.

He advised that, following successful completion of an Eol at stage 1, groups were supported to become formally constituted, and to develop area-based action plans. These plans provided an analysis of the locality, the physical environment, existing provision and key challenges and opportunities. They identified priority issues to be addressed to improve the business environment through engagement with existing businesses and stakeholders in the area. In addition, a Design Team was appointed to assist trader groups in the delivery of any capitalbased activities. The action plans and designs formed the basis for moving to a stage 2 application. A successful Stage 2 application enabled the group to draw down funding to support their action plan delivery. An overview of support was included in [Appendix 1](#).

The Director of Economic Development confirmed that the following groups were currently delivering agreed project activity, having had their action plan approved by an Assessment Panel whose members included Department for Communities (DfC), Department for Infrastructure (DfI) and council officers:

1. Ballyhackamore Business Association
2. Cliftonville/Oldpark Business Association
3. Kings Square and Cherryvalley Traders
4. Cregagh Woodstock Traders
5. Cavehill Business Association
6. Belmont Road Traders Association
7. Lower Ormeau Traders Association

He pointed out that each of these groups had received £32,000 (80%) of their £40,000. The remaining £8,000 (20%) balance would be released upon successful delivery and monitoring of their activities.

He highlighted that, in addition to the work of these seven groups, three other groups were actively engaging with the Council. They included Holywood Arches, Twin Spires and Lisburn Road Traders. They were working through issues including resolving land ownership, finalising locations for planters and displays and addressing potential traffic impact of proposed measures. He explained that, in some instances, projects had not progressed as the groups had not been able to take ownership of the plan in a way

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that would make the investment sustainable or secure local ownership. Council officers continued to liaise with these groups to complete their applications and work towards agreed action plans.

He informed the Committee that, to date, there had been a number of successful activities, including development of new markets, installation of planters and plant tubs and additional landscaping work and development of new mural artworks. In addition, areas had begun to develop their marketing, branding and advertising in line with the programme outcomes. As predicted, there had been a significant ramp-up in activity in the run-up to Christmas in order to derive maximum return on investment.

The Director of Economic Development explained that early evidence from the funded interventions had shown an increase in retail spend, increase in footfall, and an uplift in positive perceptions of neighbourhoods. Trader groups had also developed their networks through additional internal cooperation and exchange of ideas and resources.

He advised that the Enterprise and Business Growth Team continued to coordinate this programme and engage with internal officers and departments to identify wider opportunities and synergies with similar projects across the Council. Council officers would continue to engage with DfC to identify any potential future funding opportunities following the conclusion of the pilot.

During discussion, in response to a Member's question regarding the success of the scheme and its impact, the Director of Economic Development advised that an evaluation and the benefits of the scheme would be provided to the Committee in due course.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the update and work undertaken to support the delivery of area-based Vibrant Business Destinations; and
- Noted that an evaluation and the benefits of the scheme would be provided to the Committee.

Employability and Skills - Bridges to Progression Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the allocation of Bridges to Progression resources based on the outcome of the competitive application process undertaken.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Approve the allocation of Labour Market Partnership (LMP) resources for Bridges to Progression and note**

the proposals to seek proposals from delivery partners to provide targeted support that can improve outcomes for participants.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Labour Market Partnership

Members will be aware that the Labour Market Partnership is an intervention supported by DfC within all 11 council areas. Resources from the Labour Market Partnership enable the Council to increase the range and scope of employability and skills activity. The LMP also provides a platform for engagement with government departments, community partners and business organisations as a means of refocusing regional programmes more effectively within the Belfast area. The LMP action plan recognises that, while there are gaps that have been identified that will necessitate the creation of new interventions, not all activity need be new 'provision' or 'programmes'; sometimes it is equally important to profile and/or promote existing interventions. One of these interventions is Bridges to Progression which officers have ensured operates as a 'test and learn' to inform any recommissioning of Skills for Life & Work DfE contracts.

3.2 Bridges to Progression

Bridges to Progression is an intervention to support young people aged 16-17 years who are at risk of disengaging from Skills for Life & Work due to their personal circumstances. Participants can access intensive personal support to help them progress in and complete their formal training, with the ambition of improving the levels of progression into employment or further training. Previous analysis had flagged a very high level of drop out from these programmes, particularly in Belfast. It showed that the reasons behind participants no longer engaging with the programme related to wider social challenges – rather than the programme content itself.

3.3 At the October 2023 meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, it was agreed that officers would seek expressions of interest from organisations delivering these programmes, outlining how they would use resources to add value to the core activity with the objective of improving outcomes for participants. It was also agreed that officers would undertake assessment of the applications for funding in line with the approach detailed in this report.

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3.4 While all Training for Success/Skills for Life & Work providers were invited to submit applications for 2023/24 outlining how they would use the resources, seven applied and six met the quality threshold. Bridges to Progression offers an average of £750 per participant up to the maximum of £90,000 allocated from LMP Budget 2023/24:

Applicant	Activity proposed	Requested	Awarded
Springvale	Engage Programme: teambuilding, mentoring, mental health support, employer engagement & lifestyle support	£19,811	£15,113
People First	Employ a counsellor: 1-1 and group counselling sessions, crisis response service, behavioural support through CBT & staff support around boundaries, signposting and managing challenging behaviour	£20,000	£15,257
Springboard	HeadStart Programme: lifestyle support, employer engagement, training, team building and extra tutoring support for essential skills	£18,466	£14,087
Workforce	Jets Programme: personal and social development mentoring, employability coaching	£20,000	£15,257
Bryson	Well-Mind: mental health support through goal planning, conflict resolution, health and nutrition	£19,700	£15,028
Impact	LEAVE Programme: employability mentoring, mental health support, employer interfacing, training, workplace resilience, steps to overall participation	£20,000	£15,257

3.5 While the LMP budget has £90,000 allocated for Bridges to Progression, the total cost of applications above was £117,977. As outlined above, officers recommend to proportionally reduce each award to ensure that we keep within budget.

3.6 The key performance indicators are to engage with 120 young people at risk of disengaging from Skills for Life & Work for a minimum of 10 hours contact time. With the submissions and awards as detailed above we are confident we can deliver a quality and effective intervention to support those most at risk of disengagement supporting a minimum of 120 young people.

Officers are also engaging with the Department for the Economy to seek to incorporate the flexibility offered within

Bridges to Progression with future iterations of Skills for Life & Work with the aim of improving employability outcomes. The Department are keen to ensure that the learning from Bridges to Progression are utilised as a 'testbed' for innovative approaches to keep young people engaged on and progressing from statutory programmes such as Skills for Life & Work. This engagement will therefore include establishing common measurement and evaluation tools and processes as well as convening targeted engagement with each provider and their participants to capture learning in real time.

3.7 Finance and Resource Implications

The activities outlined in this report will be resourced from the agreed 2023/24 budget for the Belfast LMP Action Plan.

3.8 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

The project referenced in this report is informed by statistical research, stakeholder engagement and complementary policies and strategies. New projects or service areas are equality screened and a rural needs assessment completed. Consideration is given to equality and good relation impacts at the initial stages of project development.”

During discussion, one Member questioned the geographical spread of the Success/Skills for Life and Work Providers who would be delivering the scheme across the city. The Director of Economic Development advised that this information could be collated as part of the wider analysis of the scheme.

The Committee:

- Approved the allocation of Labour Market Partnership (LMP) resources for Bridges to Progression and noted the proposals would be sought from delivery partners to provide targeted support that could improve outcomes for participants; and
- Noted that the geographical spread of providers and participants in the scheme would be collated as part of the wider analysis of the scheme.

Chairperson

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Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 13th December, 2023

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor McKeown (Chairperson);
Aldermen McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Anglin, Bradley, Collins,
P. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas,
Gormley, Lyons, Murray, F. McAteer,
McCabe, McCann, Ó Néill and Smyth.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. S. Hewitt, Building Control Manager;
Mr. K. Bloomfield, HMO Manager; and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillor McMullan.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 15th 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, 2023, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Delegated Matters

THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING THREE ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE POWERS DELEGATED TO IT UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(d)

Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority

The Committee noted a list of applications for licences which had, since its last meeting, been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation.

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HMO Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority

The Committee noted a list of applications which had been approved under the Council's Scheme of Delegation during November 2023.

**Application for a New Licence to operate a House
of Multiple Occupation for 179 Dunluce Avenue, BT9 7AX**

The Committee was apprised of the details of the application. The Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager explained that the property had had the benefit of an HMO licence issued by the Housing Executive in the name of the of the previous owner and was scheduled to expire on 23rd March, 2021. From 14th February, 2020 the owner of the accommodation was recorded by land registry as being Mr. E. O'Hara and, in accordance with section 28(2) of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act, the existing licence ceased to have effect on the date the ownership transferred.

On 4th August, 2023 an HMO licence application was received from the owner of the accommodation. The Committee was advised that, had the new owner applied for a licence before the change of ownership had taken place, the licence which was already in effect in respect of the HMO would have been treated as being held by the new owner, until such times as their application had been determined.

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager outlined that, pursuant to the 2016 Act, the Council could only grant a licence if it was satisfied that:

- a) the occupation of the living accommodation as an HMO would not constitute a breach of planning control;
- b) the owner, and any managing agent of it, were fit and proper persons;
- c) the proposed management arrangements were satisfactory;
- d) the granting of the licence would not result in overprovision of HMOs in the locality;
- e) the living accommodation was fit for human habitation and—
 - i. was suitable for occupation as an HMO by the number of persons to be specified in the licence, or
 - ii. could be made so suitable by including conditions in the licence.

The Committee was advised that, as it was a new application, the Council's Planning Service was consulted. It had confirmed that a Certificate of Lawful Existing Use or Development ("CLEUD") was granted on 16th May, 2023.

It was reported that the NIHMO Unit had consulted with the Environmental Protection Unit in relation to nighttime and daytime noise; the Public Health and Housing Unit in relation to rubbish accumulation/filthy premises; and the Enforcement Unit in relation to litter and waste and all had confirmed that there had been no relevant enforcement action required in respect of any of the issues in the HMO in the last 5 years. The HMO Manager referred the Committee to details of other enforcement action which had taken place, which was detailed in Appendix 3 of the report.

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For the purpose of Section 12(2) of the 2016 Act, the Council had determined the locality of the accommodation as being Housing Management Area (HMA) "2/21 Ulsterville" as defined in the document Council's Local Development Plan Strategy, which was formally adopted on 2nd May, 2023. It was reported that Legal Services had advised that there was a clear requirement in section 8 of the 2016 Act upon the Council to be satisfied that the granting of a licence would not result in overprovision.

The officers had had regard to:

- a) the number and capacity of licensed HMOs in the locality; and
- b) the need for housing accommodation in the locality and the extent to which HMO accommodation was required to meet that need.

To inform the Council in its consideration of the above provisions, the Council had taken account of the 2023 Strategy given that "Nurturing sustainable and balanced communities was a fundamental aim of the LDP's housing policies." In particular, the Council had considered Policy HOU10, which stated:

"Within designated HMAs, planning permission will only be granted for Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs) and/or flats/apartments where the total number of HMOs and flats/apartments combined would not as a result exceed 20% of all dwelling units within an HMA."

The Committee was advised that, on the date of assessment, 17th November, 2023, 68% of all dwelling units in policy area "HMA 2/21 Ulsterville" were made up of HMOs and flats/apartments, which in turn exceeded the 20% development limit as set out in Policy HOU10. There were 247 (20.5%) licensed HMOs with a capacity of 1078 persons in that HMA.

It was outlined that there were a total of 1210 dwelling units in "HMA 2/21 Ulsterville". The Committee was advised that the fact that the use of the property as an HMO was permitted for planning purposes was a relevant consideration in determining whether the granting of the licence would result in overprovision.

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager reminded the Committee that there was a need for intensive forms of housing and, to meet that demand, HMOs were an important component of the housing provision. HMOs, alongside other accommodation options within the private rented sector, played an important role in meeting the housing needs of people who were single, who had temporary employment, students, low income households and, more recently, migrant workers and asylum seekers.

The Committee was advised that, on 17th November, 2023 out of 64 premises available for rent within the BT9 area on PropertyNews.com there were 3 licensed HMOs which, from the information presented on the website, represented 9 bed spaces. The HMO Manager advised the Committee that anecdotal evidence from previous conversations with HMO managing agents suggested that there was currently a lack of HMO accommodation available in that locality.

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On 7th December, 2022, Ulster University Director of Campus Life advised the Council's City Growth and Regeneration Committee that there was an "increase in competition for HMOs particularly from NIHE, Immigration Services and statutory agencies and there were increasing accommodation issues across the housing sector which required a holistic view and should include the consideration of international students, families and graduates looking for professional accommodation."

However, QUB Director of Student Plus had confirmed that the current trend indicated a significant move of students to purpose-built student accommodation blocks. She had advised the Members that there were 7,000 purpose built managed student accommodation (PBMSA) rooms in the City, the majority having been built since 2018, and approximately 5,000 in the city centre.

It was reported that November 2022 monitoring information produced by the Council's Planning Service for PBMSA indicated that 2154 bedspaces were currently under construction with 646 bedspaces becoming operational in September 2023.

Therefore, with the continued expansion of the PBMSA sector and students transitioning from private rentals to PBMSAs, it was too early to tell whether the increased competition from non-students for HMOs was a temporary problem which could be managed by the contraction in students residing in existing HMO accommodation within the locality, or evidence of an emerging long-term supply issue.

The Houses in Multiple Occupation Manager explained that, in assessing the number and capacity of licensed HMOs, as well as the need for HMO accommodation in the locality, officers could not be satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence would not result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation for the purpose of section 8(2)(d) of the 2016 Act.

The Committee was advised that no objections had been received in relation to the application. It was also reported that the accommodation had been certified as complying with the physical standards for an HMO for three persons by a technical officer from the NIHMO service, on 11th October, 2023.

On 17th November, 2023, pursuant to Paragraph 9 of Schedule 2 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, officers had issued a Notice of Proposed Decision to the Applicant advising that it was proposing to refuse the licence on the grounds of overprovision. The Members were advised that a response had not been received from the applicant.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. P. MacDermott, the applicant's legal representative, to the meeting. He outlined that:

- the property had had the benefit of an HMO registration until 23rd March, 2021, under the previous NIHE scheme, which had been granted prior to the new legislation which came into effect in April 2019;
- the applicant had purchased the property in February 2020, unaware of the new legislation and the fact that the transfer terminated the HMO licence;

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- when the applicant became aware of the legislation, he applied to the Council for a licence;
- the property had the benefit of a CLEUD;
- as of 17th November, 2023, of the 64 properties available for rent within BT9 on that date, only three were licensed HMOs;
- it was quite clear that there was a major need for HMO accommodation within the area, as the Council had acknowledged;
- a lack of HMOs in the area was leading to a major housing crisis; and
- surely the purpose of the 2019 legislation was to stop new HMO licences being granted and that the property in question had been a licensed HMO within the old scheme and, in the interest of fairness, that the application should therefore be granted.

In response to a Member's question, the HMO Manager explained that new figures regarding Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) had been released since the report had been written. The Committee was advised that the information illustrated that there continued to be an expansion of PBMSA across the City, with over 2000 bed spaces currently under construction, with an operational date of September 2024. He advised that there appeared to be a shift towards students moving into PBMSA rather than in HMOs. It was reported that officers felt that, while there was certainly a demand for HMOs across the city, the demand for HMOs could be met in other localities, thereby not increasing the burden on the local community in the Ulsterville HMA. He added that it was important for the Members to note that there was also a high demand for private rented sector homes as well as social housing within the area.

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Murray,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees to refuse the application as, in accordance with Section 12 of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016, it was satisfied that the granting of the HMO licence would result in overprovision of HMO accommodation in the locality of the accommodation, as determined under section 8(2)(d) of the Act.

Non-Delegated Matters

Pavement Café Licensing

The Building Control Manager presented the following report to the Committee:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 At your meeting in September 2023 Members, in principle, agreed to the introduction of a permanent Pavement Café licensing scheme from 1 January 2024 with a transition and implementation period of 3 months.**

1.2 Members had asked that Officers engage with various stakeholders regarding the prospect of implementing a permanent pavement café licensing scheme and that persons operating unlicensed pavement cafes would be surveyed to ascertain why they had not applied for a temporary licence.

1.3 This report provides a summary of the responses received from the consultation exercise and seeks your direction upon the implementation of a permanent licensing scheme.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Based on the information provided in this report about the consultation work that has been undertaken Members are asked to agree to:

- 1. Proceeding with the implementation of a permanent Pavement café Licensing scheme from 1 January 2024;**
- 2. A 3-month transition period to enable existing licensees to move to the permanent scheme by 31 March 2024;**
- 3. Introducing the application fees agreed at your meeting in December 2016;**
- 4. A review of the current fees being undertaken and presented to Committee for consideration in due course;**
- 5. The 5-year licence term remaining as agreed at your meeting in December 2016;**
- 6. The standard hours of operation for Pavement Cafes being set as 7.00 am to 11.00 pm and, where individual circumstances dictate that these hours are deemed unsuitable, that authority is delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control to either extend or restrict the standard times of 7.00 am to 11.00 pm as appropriate.**

2.2 Members are advised that the Licensing Committee does not have delegated powers in relation to policy decisions concerning licensing matters and as such your recommendation will be subject to ratification by Council.

3.0 Background

3.1 Members are reminded that the Council, in June 2020, introduced a temporary process for considering pavement café applications to assist the hospitality sector during recovery following the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

3.2 On 5 September 2023 a workshop was held for Members to discuss pavement café licensing and the future of the temporary scheme. Some key outcomes of that workshop were that:

- Members were generally of the view that Pavement Cafes were a positive addition to the City.
- Proper regulation and proportionate enforcement would be an important aspect of any permanent scheme to ensure a fair approach for all those wishing to benefit from a Pavement Café licence.
- Consultation on progressing with a permanent scheme should be undertaken with key stakeholders.
- There should be clear and straightforward procedures for applicants.
- Clarity on how we can progress to a permanent scheme should be provided for Members before a decision can be made on any future scheme.

3.3 At your meeting in September 2023 the Committee agreed, in principle, to the introduction of a permanent Pavement Café licensing scheme from 1 January 2024 with a transition and implementation period of 3 months to allow existing licensed businesses to continue to operate until the grant of their permanent licence is determined and after which temporary licences will no longer be valid.

3.4 In addition, the temporary scheme was extended until the 31 December 2023 to enable consultation work with all stakeholders to be completed and for the findings of that consultation to be reported to Committee for consideration before making a final decision in relation to the future of Pavement Café licensing.

4.0 Key Issues

Pavement Café Consultation

4.1 Members are advised that we have engaged with a wide range of stakeholders regarding the Temporary Pavement Café Licensing scheme and the proposal to implement a permanent licensing scheme.

4.2 This has been done through a variety of mediums including a YourSay Belfast on-line public consultation, email correspondence, an in-person survey with businesses that had not applied for a licence, workshops with representatives of people with disabilities (a number of Members attended one

of these workshops) as well as workshops with the business and hospitality community, DfI Roads and DfC.

- 4.3 A full synopsis of the consultation feedback is included as appendix 1 to this report. A summary of the key findings is outlined below:

YourSay consultation

- 4.4 A YourSay consultation to obtain views on the merits of Pavement Café Licensing was carried out. The consultation ran for 8 weeks from 29th September to 30th November 2023.
- 4.5 The YourSay public consultation received a total of 256 responses and a further 27 current temporary licence holders responded to the Licensee consultation.

1. YourSay public consultation

- 4.6 The majority of respondents indicated that they have been recent customers of a pavement café in the city, with almost 59% visiting one in the last month. The most popular locations for visiting pavement cafes are in the city centre (66%) followed by South Belfast (23.8%).
- 4.7 There is general agreement that pavement cafes are of benefit to customers and are a positive addition to Belfast.
- 4.8 In terms of negative experiences of pavement cafes, respondents identified that some pavement café areas are too large and obstructed access or footfall to an adjacent business. They also identified that pavement café furniture is not being removed from the street at night or when the business is closed causing obstruction to vehicles.
- 4.9 There was also strong support (85.4%) for proper regulation to reduce any negative impacts.
- 4.10 Most importantly 88% of the public consultees were in support of a permanent pavement café licensing scheme for Belfast.

2. YourSay licensee consultation

- 4.11 The YourSay targeted consultation with temporary Pavement café licence holders received a total of 27 responses.
- 4.12 The majority (72%) of those with a temporary licence found the application process to be straightforward.

- 4.13 The majority of respondents (51.9%) said the fees previously agreed by Committee wouldn't stop them applying.
- 4.14 Going forward, the consultees were overwhelmingly in support of a permanent pavement café licensing scheme for Belfast (88.5%). Comments from consultees indicate that a permanent scheme would enhance their businesses, encourage them to invest more, provide clear operating parameters, increase vibrancy and give Belfast a European feel with a café culture.

Feedback from Section 75 and disability umbrella group meetings

- 4.45
- Generally, people were supportive of pavement cafes and they are seen as a positive addition to the city.
 - For people that still feel vulnerable to covid, etc. they feel more comfortable in outdoor spaces.
 - Some cafes create a tripping hazard and some businesses have taken over pedestrian areas to the extent that sometimes people are being forced onto the road.
 - Pavement Cafes should not take over car parking spaces – accessible car parking needs retained.
 - Barriers surrounding pavement cafés can sometimes confine the space making it more difficult for some people using a rollator or wheelchair.
 - Conversely, it is recognised that barriers around cafes are important for those with sight issues.
 - Good regulation/monitoring and enforcement is required.
 - Voices of disabled people must be heard – the disabled (purple) £ is worth as much as anyone else's.
 - City needs to be safe for disabled people to go the places they want to.
- 4.16 Following the workshop Guide Dogs Northern Ireland provided their views on the proposed scheme. Guide dogs provides services that support the independence of people with sight loss as well as campaigning and giving advice to government on creating an inclusive and accessible built environment. A copy of their letter is included as appendix 2.
- 4.17 Guide Dogs Northern Ireland expressed how reducing obstacles on pavements and street clutter is important to improving the quality of life of people with sight loss and raised concern at a possible rapid expansion of licences for

pavement furniture, with streets becoming inaccessible if large areas of pavements are occupied by new furniture.

4.18 They asked specifically that:

- 1) the application consultation process be made accessible.
- 2) it be a requirement for all pavement café furniture to be separated from the pavement by a barrier.
- 3) a minimum pavement width of 2m (reducing to 1.5 m when not feasible) be required.
- 4) the Council would investigate concerns around accessibility and that a licence should be revoked if the pavement is not sufficiently accessible.

4.19 To reassure Members our guidance document for temporary pavement cafes contains a minimum pavement width of 2 metres clearance with a reduction of 1.5m in constrained environments. It further states that the licensed area should ideally be enclosed by way of adequate screening, to demarcate the area, to make it distinguishable to other pavement users, and to assist blind and visually impaired pedestrians. The guidance is being reviewed and updated for the permanent scheme.

4.20 Members will be aware that there is a separate agenda item on pavement café licence conditions. In that report we have suggested a condition to deal with keeping routes along pavements clear and taking into account the needs of disabled people.

Hospitality / business umbrella group workshop

4.21

- Very supportive of a permanent scheme for Pavement Cafes and also very supportive of Parklets (and more pedestrianisation in City) with regulation/enforcement.
- Requirement to be able to remove furniture in 20 minutes is seen as a problem which makes aspiring to a good quality enclosure and furniture difficult.
- Better quality plans were not seen as an issue.
- The fees set previously were not viewed as unreasonable and it was suggested that this could increase if you were getting more space. Although size should not be related to available indoor space.
- It was accepted that some existing Pavement Cafes are too large and will need to reduce in size for a permanent scheme.

- **Cleansing issues – agreed that should be condition of licence that they need to keep it clean.**
- **There was concern that a minimum requirement of 2m clear footpath should be set for accessibility in all cases, as lesser width may be acceptable depending on location.**

4.22 Following the workshop the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) provided their views on the proposed implementation of the scheme in January 2024. A copy of their letter is included as appendix 3.

4.23 Whilst they fully understand the need for updated, permanent arrangements the FSB have expressed concerns that the process appears to be rushed and incomplete. They have asked that the Council consider:

- 1) Extending the current temporary scheme to allow for adequate stakeholder engagement with the consultation.**
- 2) Re-consult stakeholders on the full draft pavement licensing scheme once the recommendations from stakeholders have been taken into account and/or the draft has been brought to the Licensing Committee for discussion.**
- 3) Ensure all licensed and unlicensed pavement café operators have been contacted, and allow at least a 6 month transition period from the date a new scheme is properly consulted upon, agreed and has been fully communicated with respective premises.**

4.24 Officers believe that the Council has undertaken extensive consultation as outlined in this report. Two of the responding organisations welcomed the level and range of stakeholder engagement undertaken as part of this consultation process. We have visited over 60 unlicensed operators to discuss the licensing scheme as part of our consultation and this engagement will continue with both licensed and unlicensed operators. Officers are also looking at further ways to engage with businesses following the introduction of a permanent scheme to assist and support them.

Dfl Roads engagement workshop

4.25

- **Pavement café culture and making spaces people-centric is something Dfl support but public safety/road safety/pedestrian safety is paramount.**
- **Pedestrian numbers in city centre are likely to increase over time. Proposals in the Eastern Transport Plan will**

give space back to active travel, less parking spaces, more space for pedestrians.

- Each application needs be assessed individually on its own merits – need to consider levels of footfall on footway etc.
- The existing BCC guidance has been working satisfactorily for temporary scheme but Dfl would hope to get agreed NI wide guidance screened and published.
- Dfl favoured shorter licence period than 5 years, to help deal with changing road/footpath landscape, but realised this may mean licensees would make less investment etc.
- Council processes needed to revoke or vary PC Licences to cater for changing streetscape
- Street furniture (benches/cycle stands) need to be standalone and outside of pavement café areas.
- Dfl keen that pavement café furniture is removed outside operation hours, and that these hours should reflect the need to have furniture removed to facilitate unloading/loading hours for those in pedestrianised areas with restricted access for vehicles e.g. removed at night until 11am the next morning – if loading/unloading allowed until 11am.

Survey of business who did not apply for a Licence

- 4.26 At your meeting in September Members had expressed concern about the number of unlicensed pavement cafes and asked that we consult with those businesses which had not applied for licences under the temporary scheme, to determine if there were specific reasons or barriers which they had encountered.
- 4.27 A Licensing Officer conducted an in-person survey around the city, visiting 61 businesses that currently operate an unlicensed pavement café to follow up on this request.
- 4.28 The overwhelming reason (69%) given for not applying was that they were unaware of the licensing scheme.
- 4.29 However, feed-back provided was generally positive and the majority of businesses welcomed the permanent scheme and confirmed they would apply.
- 4.30 Most felt that the original fee agreed by the Council was reasonable and others commented that the introduction of the permanent scheme would give them assurance, by obtaining

a licence that would be valid for a number of years, to invest in their pavement cafe.

- 4.31 The results of the consultation exercises demonstrate there is clear agreement that there should be a permanent Pavement Café licensing scheme.
- 4.32 Taking into consideration the range of feedback that has been received as a result of the consultation Committee is now asked to consider if a permanent Pavement Café licensing scheme should now be implemented on 1 January 2024 and, if so, that this will be subject to the transitional arrangements as outlined below.

Proposed Transitional Arrangements

- 4.33 It is considered necessary to have a transition and implementation period of 3 months for the introduction of a Permanent Pavement Café Licensing scheme. During the implementation period those with an existing temporary licence will be required to apply for a licence under the permanent scheme but may continue to operate their pavement café until their new application is determined.
- 4.34 The implementation period will also allow the Council time to process grant applications for permanent applications and for relevant statutory and public consultations to be undertaken.
- 4.35 A cut-off date for transitional arrangements to enable a move to a permanent Pavement Café Licence scheme is 31 March 2024. Thereafter any temporary licences will no longer be valid and any that have not made an application for a Licence will be subject to routine enforcement procedures.
- 4.36 Bearing in mind the comments of the FSB, if Members are minded to introduce a permanent scheme, you may wish to consider a longer transition period than 3 months.

Fees

- 4.37 At your meeting in December 2016 the Committee, after considering a number of options, agreed the fees that should be charged for a Pavement Café Licence and determined a grant application fee of £225.00 with an annual licence fee of £55.00 for the ensuing 4 years. (No annual licence fee is charged in the first year). In addition, it was agreed that the fee for an application for the variation of a licence and also for the renewal of a licence would be £112.50.

- 4.38 Whilst the legislation allows the Council to set fees at full cost recovery levels Members decided to set a significantly reduced fee, equating to around 25p per day for a 5-year licence.
- 4.39 Given the circumstances under which the temporary scheme was introduced, the Council waived any fees associated with a Pavement Café application.
- 4.40 As a result of the YourSay public consultation the majority of consultees felt that the cost of administering the pavement café licence process should be met by Café owners or operators (74.4%) rather than coming from within existing council budgets (25.6%).
- 4.41 Also, through our stakeholder engagement it is apparent that businesses were not opposed to paying a fee. At the business workshop, the Federation of Small Businesses commented that paying a fee or bigger fee shouldn't be a problem for businesses, as they will carry out a cost benefit analysis to ascertain if its financially viable for their business.
- 4.42 Committee is asked to agree that the fees set in 2016 be implemented for the permanent scheme as there is scope within the Pavement Cafes Act for councils to ensure the cost of administering pavement cafes is not a rate borne activity. As these fees were set 7 years ago it is suggested that a review of fees be undertaken so that inflationary uplift and the costs of the operation of the scheme and associated enforcement activity can be assessed.

Duration of Licences

- 4.43 It was previously determined by Council in 2017 that Pavement Café licences will be granted for a period of 5 years.
- 4.44 When asked about a licence period of 5 years, 52.2% of the public felt that was about right; 26.3% felt it was too long; and 6.7% thought it was too short. 77.8% of current licensees felt that a 5-year licence was about right whilst 11.1% felt it was too short a period.
- 4.45 Comments received on the licence duration indicate that business would be happy to invest in quality furniture knowing the licence was for 5 years. Other comments felt that the nature of the industry and the need to capture changes mean a shorter licence period would be more appropriate.

- 4.46 Dfl Roads are concerned about the Council issuing a 5-year licence favouring a shorter licence period to help deal with changes to the road/footpath landscape.**
- 4.47 Officers believe there are sufficient powers contained within the Licensing of Pavement Cafés Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 that should any part of the public area become, or is going to become, unsuitable for that purpose to revoke a licence.**
- 4.48 Members are asked to determine if the 5-year licence term should be retained.**

Licence Conditions

- 4.49 At your meeting in December 2016, the Committee, agreed Standard Licence Conditions which would be applied to pavement cafés.**
- 4.50 The majority of those conditions have proven appropriate, however there is scope to clarify and augment some of those Conditions, particularly in relation to street cleanliness issues and issues around removing and storing pavement café furniture.**
- 4.51 A separate report will follow at this meeting to discuss this matter.**

Licence hours of operation

- 4.52 At your meeting in December 2020, the Committee, agreed that the standard hours for which a Temporary Pavement Café Licence may be permitted to operate would be set as 7.00 am to 11.00 pm, and authority was delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control to grant any application for a pavement café licence to trade earlier or later than the standard times of 7.00 am to 11.00 pm.**
- 4.53 The consultation exercise has highlighted issues around loading and unloading of vehicles making deliveries and that the times of operation of a pavement café should be set to minimise disruption of deliveries to business premises.**
- 4.54 For clarity for any applicant for a permanent Pavement Café Licence Members are asked to agree that the standard hours of operation are set as 7.00 am to 11.00 pm. Where individual circumstances dictate that these hours are deemed unsuitable it is suggested that authority is delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control to either extend or restrict the standard times of 7.00 am to 11.00 pm as appropriate.**

Guidance documentation

- 4.55 The Council produced a guidance document to help business owners to prepare an application for a Temporary Pavement Café Licence during the Covid 19 pandemic. That guidance document was based on guidelines prepared by the Department for Communities when they brought in the Licensing of Pavement Cafés Act (NI) 2014.
- 4.56 In addition, the Licensing Forum Northern Ireland produced a 'Guidance for Applicants' document to assist those intending to make an application for a pavement café licence.
- 4.57 Our guidance was equality screened with reviews in 2020 and 2021 for the temporary scheme.
- 4.58 Arising from the consultation exercise some suggested amendments to our guidance have been made by the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (Imtac). Imtac is a committee of disabled people and older people. Its role is to advise Government and others in Northern Ireland on issues that affect the mobility of Deaf people, disabled people and older people.
- 4.59 A copy of the Imtac letter is included as appendix 4 to this report.
- 4.60 Officers understand that DfI Roads are to finalise the technical guidance which the Council was seeking to base our own guidance upon at the time that the legislation was introduced in 2016. Any technical changes highlighted in this regional guidance will be reflected in our guidance.
- 4.61 As previously stated, our guidance document for pavement cafes is being reviewed and updated for the permanent scheme. Suggested changes from Imtac and others will be considered and incorporated where possible. In doing so we must strike a balance in addressing concerns raised through the consultation exercise as it highlighted differing and competing needs, not just from applicants but also in feedback from disability groups.
- 4.62 Officers will undertake additional engagement with interested parties to consider their views further and to develop our guidance. In addition, we will monitor the rollout and implementation of the scheme and, where necessary, guidance can be amended further if necessary.

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

- 5.1 The grant application fee for a 5-year pavement café licence is £225.00 with an annual licence fee of £55.00 for the subsequent 4 years. If the fees are waived there will be a total lost income over 5 years of at least £41,830 on the basis of applications granted at present. Given that this only represents about 40% of the total number of pavement cafes in the City should a scheme be implemented the loss in income to the Council would be considerably higher.**

6.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

- 6.1 The Building Control Service has consulted with a range of stakeholders on various aspects of pavement café licensing over the last number of years. This included a formal consultation with potential pavement café operators on the proposed fees for a pavement café licence application in 2016. In June 2020 the Council introduced the temporary process for pavement café licence applications, with no associated fee, to help businesses recover during Covid-19. The temporary scheme underwent a screening process in 2020 and it was reviewed in 2021.**
- 6.2 Prior to the current public consultation, an equality screening process and rural needs assessment were undertaken. Views were sought on the information contained in these draft documents and these will be updated accordingly based on the feedback obtained through the consultation and engagement process prior to progressing to a permanent scheme.”**

The Analysis of Consultation responses can be found [here](#).

The Building Control Manager stated that officers would continue to engage with disability groups to ensure that the guidance document was up to date and fit for purpose.

A number of Members thanked the officers for their hard work in respect of drawing up the permanent Licensing Scheme.

A Member stated that his colleague had recently received correspondence from Guide Dogs NI and Imtac, raising concerns with the report and specifically that Guide Dogs NI had felt that their response had been misrepresented within it. He suggested that the Committee should defer consideration of the report until the issues raised by both organisations had been addressed.

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The Building Control Manager reminded the Members that the responses from both organisations had been included within the papers.

The City Solicitor stated that she was surprised to hear that the organisations felt that their views had been misrepresented, as officers had been working closely with them, and their input had been invaluable in drawing up the terms of the scheme.

The Building Control Manager reiterated that officers had engaged extensively with those organisations and that officers would continue to do so, to ensure that their needs were accounted for.

The Director of Planning and Building Control advised the Committee that any such issues could be addressed within the guidance document, which was yet to be produced. She stated that, therefore, the Committee could consider the officers' recommendations regarding the implementation of the permanent scheme, with a view to ensuring that any relevant issues raised by consultees in the meantime were addressed through the guidance.

During discussion of the officers' recommendations, the Members agreed that a four month transition period, to enable licensees to move to the permanent scheme, would put less pressure on businesses.

The Committee subsequently agreed, subject to officers continuing to engage with the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (Imtac), Guide Dogs NI and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) NI in relation to concerns which they had raised regarding the Pavement Café Scheme, in order that the guidance for the scheme would reflect best practice; and that those three organisations would be invited to attend the next meeting, or a Special meeting if necessary, to outline any specific concerns which they had, to:

1. Proceed with the implementation of a permanent Pavement café Licensing scheme from 1st January 2024;
2. A four month transition period to enable existing licensees to move to the permanent scheme by 30th April, 2024;
3. Introduce the application fees agreed at the Licensing Committee meeting of 14th December, 2016;
4. A review of the current fees being undertaken and presented to the Committee for consideration in due course;
5. The 5-year licence term remaining as agreed on 14th December, 2016; and
6. The standard hours of operation for Pavement cafés being set as 7.00 am to 11.00 pm and, where individual circumstances dictate that these hours are deemed unsuitable, that authority is delegated to the Director of Planning and Building Control to either extend or restrict the standard times of 7.00 am to 11.00 pm as appropriate.

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**Consideration of Standard Conditions to be
attached to Pavement Cafe Licences**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report until January 2024.

Chairperson

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Planning Committee

Tuesday, 12th December, 2023

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Garrett (Chairperson);
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Anglin, Bell, Bradley, Brooks,
Carson, Doherty, P. Donnelly, S. Douglas
Doran, Ferguson, Groogan, Hanvey, Maskey,
McCann, Nic Bhranair and Whyte.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor;
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning)
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management);
Ms. C. Reville, Principal Planning Officer;
Mr. M. McErlean, Senior Planning Officer;
Ms. L. Walshe, Senior Planning Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th November, 2023 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, 2023, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor T. Brooks declared an interest in relation to item 8a on the agenda, LA04/2023/292/F - Redevelopment of existing surface car park for the erection of new purpose built, managed student accommodation scheme comprising of 354no. units with shared amenity spaces, ancillary accommodation, on street car parking and landscaping, site bounded by Glenalpin Street, Wellwood Street and Norwood Street, in that she owned a property adjacent to the application site and stated that she would leave the meeting while the item was being considered.

Councillor Whyte declared an interest in relation to item 10j on the agenda, LA04/2023/3832/F- Section 54 application to vary condition No. 4 of LA04/2013/434/F (as amended in PAC decision 2016/A0033) to vary trigger point for provision of community centre. Amended text for this condition: In accordance with the Phasing Plan agreed under Condition 3 and on the occupation of the first residential unit, the Council shall be notified, and no later than six years from that date the Community Centre and associated infrastructure, marked on stamped

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approved drawing no. 2E, dated 28.08.2015 shall be completed and a report submitted to the Council to verify this, Blacks Gate Development (Former Visteon Factory) Blacks Road, in that the applicant was a client which he had undertaken work for.

Withdrawn Items

The Committee noted that item 9c on the agenda, under the heading LA04/2022/2103/F - Proposed change of use and redevelopment of the existing waste management facility and adjoining plant hire business to create a new waste disposal installation for the incineration of healthcare and hazardous waste streams and associated works. - 1 and 2 Duncrue Pass, had been withdrawn.

Committee Site Visits

Note of Committee Site Visits

The Committee noted the Committee site visits and agreed to defer the undernoted applications in order that the Committee could undertake a site visit:

- LA04/2023/2668/F - Demolition of existing buildings and the erection of an affordable housing development comprising of 71No. units with a mix of apartments and townhouses, including an ancillary community hub and offices, car parking, landscaping and all associated site and access works - Lands bound by Pilot Street, Short Street, the rear of nos. 11-29 Garmoyle Street and, the rear of Nos. 63 and 65a Dock Street and No. 123 Corporation Street;
- LA04/2023/2388/F - Residential development comprising 256no. units, public realm, and associated access and site works. - Lands immediately North of Cross Harbour Bridge, East of Donegall Quay and South of AC Marriott Hotel, City Quays; and
- LA04/2022/0097/F - Proposed three and a half storey residential development comprising of 18no. units (3no. wheelchair apartments and 15no. Category 1) and associated access, bin storage, boundary treatments, bike stands, car parking and site and landscaping works (Amended Drawings) - 22-30 Hopefield Avenue.

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Request for Briefing and Site Visit - LA04/2020/2607/F - Residential development for the erection of 33 no dwellings (including 5 no affordable units) including public open space, equipped children's play area and associated development as enabling works to deliver the refurbishment of 3 no listed pavilions within the Belvoir Park Hospital complex. Former Belvoir Park Hospital Site Hospital Road, Belfast

The Committee acceded to the request.

Request for Site Visit - LA04/2022/1219/F - Demolition of existing building and erection of 11 storey building (May Street/Victoria Street) and 4 storey building (Gloucester Street) comprising 77 apartments with communal areas, ground floor retail services (A2) unit, cycle and car parking, and vehicular access via Gloucester Street - 177-183 Victoria Street 66-72 May Street and 4-8 Gloucester Street

The Committee acceded to the request.

Provision/Removal of Accessible Parking Bays

The Committee noted the provision of accessible parking bays at the following locations:

- Cliftonville Circus;
- 28 Ava Crescent;
- 236 Duncairn Gardens; and
- 17 Cooke Street.

Proposed Speed Limit Reduction

The Committee noted the speed limit reduction for Ballygowan Road.

Appeals

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in November, 2023.

The Committee further noted that the Department for Infrastructure had determined that, under the terms of Section 88 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, application LA04/2021/1318/DCA was required to be referred to it for determination. The Department also

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required the referral of application LA04/2021/1317/7, under the terms of Section 29 of the Act.

Miscellaneous Reports

Delegation of Applications with NIW Objections

The Committee agreed to delegate to the Director of Planning and Building Control those Local planning applications to which NI Water has objected set out in the report.

Planning Service Updated Improvement Plan

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

To report on the Planning Service’s updated Improvement Plan. The report includes current challenges for the Planning Service and how these are being addressed. The report also includes an update on the ‘lean redesign experimentation’, previously reported to the Committee in [April 2023](#).

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The report is for notation.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 The Planning Service first published its Improvement Plan in 2018, following an independent review in 2017. Central to the recommendations of the independent review was the implementation of ‘10 Operating Principles’, aimed at front-loading the planning application process and providing a more efficient, effective and customer-focused service. This also included the publication of an *Application Checklist*, which sets out the minimum information requirements for applications when they are submitted. Belfast remains the only Planning Authority in NI which publishes such comprehensive guidance, and the Department for Infrastructure (‘Department’) has recognised the important role it has played in improving the application process, committing to introduce legislation to make such checklists mandatory as they are in GB.

3.2 Since 2018, the Planning Service has regularly updated its Improvement Plan and periodically reported it to the Committee.

Following a recent period of significant strategic change, including the implementation of the new Planning Portal in December 2022 and adoption of the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy, the Improvement Plan has been reviewed and further updated. For the next period, its key priorities are to reduce the number of live planning applications in the system and further improve the operational effectiveness of the Development Management ('DM') service.

Current challenges

3.3 The Planning Service has experienced significant challenge over the past 12 months or so, including:

- Implementation of the new Planning Portal in December 2022;
- Adoption of the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy in May 2023;
- Staff turnover and long-term absence;
- Ongoing difficulties with the statutory consultation process and limitations of the NI planning system generally; and
- Continued high number of live applications, originating from the COVID-19 pandemic and contributed by the above factors.

Implementation of the new Planning Portal

3.4 The new regional Planning Portal went live in December 2022. It took around 3 months for the new system to become stable, impacting on the throughput of applications and performance.

3.5 Belfast City Council has responsibility for the contract management of the new Planning Portal ('Intelligent Client Function') and is taking a lead role in continuous improvement of the system. The new team has settled in well and has received positive feedback from the partner Planning Authorities.

3.6 A key benefit of the new system is the ability to submit online applications with 83% of applications to the Council made online since go live in December 2022.

Belfast LDP: Plan Strategy 2035

3.7 The Plan Strategy was adopted in May of this year. It will continue to take time for the new Plan Strategy to completely bed in as officers, agents, applicants and developers build confidence in understanding and applying its new policies. There continues to be focus on staff training and development, particularly around new

policy areas such as affordable housing, housing mix, mitigation and management of climate change, and SuDS.

Statutory consultation process and issues with the NI planning system

- 3.8 Applications of any tangible scale and significance require input from central government departments through the statutory consultation process. Statutory consultee performance remains patchy, with some consultees taking many weeks if not several months to provide a substantive response. There are particular issues with response times and support from DfI Roads, DfI Rivers and DAERA. This often results in delays and uncertainty to the application process.
- 3.9 The Planning Service continues to play a prominent role in pushing for significant reform of the regional NI planning system and advancing the regional improvement programme.

Backlog of live applications

- 3.10 Prior to COVID-19, the Planning Service had around 850 live applications. This grew to around 1,250 applications during the pandemic, increasing individual caseloads to unsustainable levels. Whilst the number of live cases was reduced to below 1,000 by November 2022, the issues around implementation of the new Planning Portal, adoption of the Plan Strategy and staff turnover have contributed to an increase to the current 1,100 live cases. There is currently a significant drive to reduce the number of live applications to more sustainable levels.

Performance

- 3.11 The Planning Service is subject to three statutory indicators. These are set out in the table below along with last year's performance, current performance and peak performance since transfer of planning powers to the Council in 2015.

Description	Target	Peak	2022/23	Current
Major applications	30 weeks (average processing time)	31.0 weeks (2021/22)	57.2 weeks	66.0 weeks
Local applications	15 weeks (average processing time)	14.0 weeks (2019/20)	19.8 weeks	19.6 weeks
Enforcement cases	70% cases concluded	93.2% (2019/20)	N/A	90.6%

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	within 39 weeks			
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3.12 Under performance of these statutory indicators is a result of a range of contributing factors, including those set out previously, some of which are outside the control of the Council. Work is ongoing at a regional level to improve the NI planning system as a whole and to develop a new Regional Performance Framework. This framework will support the council reporting on quantitative and qualitative performance in a more detailed way, helping to identify areas for improvement at regional level. The Planning Service is also developing a new local performance framework to support further improvement.

3.13 In relation to Major application performance, the Section 76 planning agreement process remains a key issue. Planning and Legal Services continue to work closely together to improve the process, including the implementation of model planning agreements and customer guidance. Planned improvements in this area could have a significant positive impact on Major application performance.

3.14 The enforcement service continues to exceed its statutory targets.

Improvement

3.15 Following this period of significant strategic change, the specific focus now is on reducing the number of live applications and improving the operational effectiveness of the DM service. This will be built around a focus on 'People', 'Policy' and 'Process' as set out in the updated Planning Service Improvement Plan.

3.16 Central to this improvement will be the empowerment of staff, building individual and team confidence. The objective is to support corporately aligned and autonomous decision-making by individuals at all levels within the Planning Service. This is vital to the delivery of the service as it not sustainable for decision-making to be funnelled through a small number of more senior officers.

3.17 In these regards, the Improvement Plan aligns with the Council's new People Strategy, providing an environment in which staff can demonstrate the organisational values of 'integrity', 'responsibility', 'creativity' and 'problem solving'.

3.18 Key actions in the updated Improvement Plan include the following:

- Streamlining operational processes including the wider roll out of the new lean experimentation approach to applications;
- Simplifying the PAD process to make it quicker and more responsive;

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- Staff training and development;
- Reviewing the current 10 Operating Principles;
- Making more effective use of the new Planning Portal;
- Improving the Section 76 planning agreement process; and
- Continuing to influence positive change and improvement to the NI planning system

3.19 It is expected that there will be tangible improvement to performance over the coming months with performance continuing to be monitored monthly.

Reorganisation of the DM team

3.20 In June 2023, the DM teams were reorganised to provide a more suitable staffing structure to support these changes. Since transfer of planning to the Council in 2015, the Planning Service had operated two DM teams – a small ‘Majors’ team that processed Major applications (about 1% of all applications) and a much larger ‘Locals’ team that processed the remainder (99%). This model was no longer considered fit for purpose and so the DM service has been reorganised into two geographical area teams covering North and East; and South and West respectively.

3.21 There are several benefits of this new structure, notably:

- More equitable roles, particularly at Senior Planning Officer level, with responsibility for sign off of decisions spread across a greater number of Senior Officers to avoid blockages;
- Greater flexibility in moving work between the two teams to respond to spikes in applications, PADs and other work; and
- Crucially, providing better support for cases officers and widening their experience and development. The new structure means that work on Major and strategic applications can be supported by more junior officers within the sub-teams so as to widen experience and provide a broader ‘team approach’ to project work.

3.22 Each area team is managed by a Principal Planning Officer under the overall management of the Planning Manager (Development Management).

Lean redesign experimentation

3.23 In December 2022, the Planning Service first reported to the Committee on the innovative experimentation that it has been undertaking following lean systems redesign principles. Since August 2022, a small project team within the Planning Service has

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experimented with 291 applications, determining 173 of these with an approval rate of 98% (94% normal approval rate).

3.24 Table 1 below shows previous and current lean performance with a comparison against current Planning Service performance as a whole.

Performance measure	November 2022	November 2023	All Local applications
Valid to decision	5 weeks	11 weeks	19.6 weeks
Receipt to decision	7 weeks	11 weeks	(Not measured)

Table 1: Previous and current lean experimentation performance

3.24 The lean experimentation has been impacted by the same challenges affecting the wider DM service as set out earlier in this report, including issues around implementation of the new Planning Portal. Therefore, application decisions have been removed from Table 1 for the period from 18 November 2022 to 31 March 2023 during which the Planning Portal was bedding in. These challenges have also prevented the project team expanding beyond two case officers. Nevertheless, the project team has experimented with around 300 applications, amassing significant learning.

3.25 The key learning points from the experimentation to date have been:

- Assessment of applications on ‘Day 1’ allows the project team to make decisions much more quickly;
- Prompt, direct customer contact builds relationships and saves time;
- Significant scope to reduce hand-overs and inefficiencies;
- Experimental methodology best relates to relatively straightforward applications, although since the summer the project team has been experimenting with large scale Local and Major applications;
- As a by-product, the project team has identified areas where amendments to legislation could make huge differences overall. The Department has accepted that this lean methodology should be applied to the NI planning system overall; and
- Case officers have more variety in their work, making it more enjoyable and supporting their development.

3.26 Some areas of learning have already been applied to the rest of the DM service to improve overall efficiency and effectiveness of the wider team. Moving forward, it is planned to roll out the new lean way of working to the whole DM service, initially at Assistant

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Planning Officer level, which undertakes over half of the overall casework, as proportionately this will have the greater benefit on delivery of the Planning Service in the shortest space of time.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 There are no financial or resource implications associated with this report.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

5.1 There are no equality or good relations / rural needs implications associated with this report.”

Noted.

Appeal for Non-Determination

LA04/2023/2922/F - Redevelopment of existing surface car park for the erection of new purpose built, managed student accommodation scheme comprising of 354no. units with shared amenity spaces, ancillary accommodation, on street car parking and landscaping - Site bounded by Glenalpin Street, Wellwood Street and Norwood Street

The Senior Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the proposal and highlighted the following key issues for the assessment of the application:

- Principle of development;
- Scale, Massing and Design;
- Climate change;
- Open Space Provision;
- Impact on Built Heritage;
- Traffic and Parking;
- Impact on Amenity;
- Contamination;
- Impact on Air Quality;
- Noise;
- Drainage and Flooding;
- Waste water infrastructure;
- Waste Management;
- Developer Contributions/Section 76 Agreement; and
- Pre-application Community Consultation.

He pointed out that DfI Roads had raised concerns due to the absence of disabled parking and explained that the zero-parking scheme was consistent with previously approved city centre purpose built managed student accommodation schemes which had also provided

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no in-curtilage parking, subject to robust Travel Plans and that two disabled parking spaces had been proposed in a lay-by on Norwood Street.

He referred the Committee to the addendum report that stated: *'The appeal was submitted within a timely manner (i.e. after 2 months from the application valid date and within 4 months of when the decision should have been made, i.e. by 18th February 2024)'* and he pointed out that the date for submission should be taken as 13th November, 2023 as the 16 week target for determination of a major application, 13th July, 2023 plus four calendar months.

He reported that no other consultees had offered any objection and that 166 representations in objection to the proposal had been received along with a 271 signature petition and he outlined the officer responses to the concerns which had been raised in the representations.

He stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered unacceptable as the site was located within an established residential area and, as such, was contrary to Policy HOU12 of the Plan Strategy. He added that there had been no completed Section 76 planning agreement in place to secure the management plan and employability and skills plan necessary to make the development acceptable.

The Committee agreed that the Council's position at the appeal should be that planning permission be refused and that the appeal be dismissed.

Planning Applications previously considered

LA04/2022/0118/F - Erection of 46No.apartment units over three storeys, with associated car parking site and landscaping works and the alteration of an existing vehicular access. (amended plans received 21-9-23) - 146 Parkgate Avenue

The Planning Manager explained that the application had been approved by the Committee at its meeting in October, 2023 and that, in subsequent discussions with the applicant, it had become apparent that the applicant did not own all of the lands to the west and south-west which had been proposed as open space in the application.

He stated that the applicant could therefore only provide a reduced area of open space in association with the proposed development and referred the Committee to an amended site location plan that outlined lands within the applicant's ownership and an amended site layout.

He explained that the lands adjacent to the site which had been confirmed as being in the applicant's control, 1050sqm, had been proposed as open space, which equated to 32% of the application site and well above the minimum 10% requirement.

The Committee agreed to approve the application, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building

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Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and the Section 76 planning agreement and to deal with any other matters that might arise prior to the decision being issued, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2022/1203/F - Relocation of 5 No. allotments approved under LA04/2020/0042/F. Introduction of an additional No. 8 allotments, a sensory garden and support hub building for day care of young adults (Amended application site boundary, proposal description and drawings) - Glenriver Lands adjacent to 78 Cloona Park

The Planning Manager explained that consideration of the application had been deferred by the Committee at its meetings in October and November, 2023 in order that the Committee could undertake site visits to the proposed location.

He provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key issues:

- Principle of development;
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area;
- Compatibility with adjacent uses;
- Impact on Built heritage;
- Access and parking;
- Drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Contamination;
- Noise, odour and other environmental impacts;
- Climate change; and
- Natural heritage.

He stated that the site was located within the Colin Glen (Lisburn) Urban Landscape Wedge and had been zoned for landscape, amenity or recreation use in the BUAP 2001 and that the majority of the site had previous approval for allotments and ancillary storage/changing facility/kitchenette.

He reported that there were no objections from statutory consultees, however, 435 objections had been received from local residents, including two petitions, which highlighted the following concerns with regard to the proposal:

- Nature and scale of the development;
- Importance of the Urban Landscape Wedge;
- Loss of Open Space;
- Impact on the environment;
- Impact on amenity (noise);

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- Measurements in the Contamination Assessment;
- Traffic and Road Safety;
- Access should be from Stewartstown Road instead; and
- Anti-social behaviour.

The Planning Manager explained that the applicant was a private healthcare group which intended to use the site as a support hub for the care of vulnerable young adults and that the building would support the therapeutic aspect of the allotments, especially in poor weather.

He reported that the applicant had stated it had experience of operating a similar facility for people with learning difficulties and autism at Kilcreggan, Magherafelt and that the proposal would be a significant community benefit for west Belfast.

He stated that the proposal was in conflict with landscape policies, however, the overall landscape impact was not considered to be significant and that the redevelopment would bring substantial community benefits that decisively outweigh the loss of the open space

He explained that the use of the building would be restricted by a condition to day care facilities for vulnerable young adults, Monday to Friday from 9.00 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. and occasionally on weekends for special events, He added that the proposal would be supported by three to four members of staff, with 10 to 15 vulnerable adults visiting the premises each day, transported by minibus and, occasionally, by parents and/or carers.

He reported that, on balance, it was recommended that the Committee approve the application.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. C. McIlver to the meeting, who was attending in representation of the applicant, Conway Healthcare Group.

Ms. McIlver explained that Conway Healthcare Group fully appreciated that the application was complex and had received a high level of objection from local residents but that the magnitude of community benefits outweighed any policy objection or local opposition.

She highlighted the applicant's strong fallback option, the principle of developing an allotment facility with accompanying structures at the proposal site, with access via Cloona Park had been established two years previously and remained live for another three years and would be implemented irrespective of the outcome of the application.

She explained that there was a need for a specially designed support building and that, without suitable shelter, service users and staff would be unable to attend the outdoor facility in bad weather.

She stated that the mobile containers which had been previously approved would only provide basic facilities and were not large enough to allow users to congregate inside, socialise, eat lunch and develop friendships. She added that, whilst the support building was larger than the mobile structures previously approved, the proposed built form was relatively modest, with the primary use of the site given over to outdoor usable space in the form of allotments, vegetable patches and sensory gardens.

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She stated that the majority of local opposition was regarding access to the proposal via Cloona Park and that the access arrangement has been approved by DfI Roads under the previous application and would not unacceptably affect amenities and land/buildings that ought to be protected in the public interest. She added that third party concerns were not determining in the application and should not warrant blocking the development of a valuable community facility in a small section of underused, overgrown, inaccessible open space.

She concluded by stating that Conway Healthcare Group would deliver and operate the proposed outdoors allotment facility that local families would greatly benefit from and that there was a reasonable argument that policy objections could be outweighed by the community benefits and locational advantage of reusing and repurposing vacant grassland.

The Chairperson thanked Ms. McIlver for her representation and welcomed Mr. P. McGeough, Mr. S. Keenan and Mr. B. Moane from Cloona Park/Helens Wood Residents Association, who were attending the meeting in objection to the application.

Mr. McGeough stated that he was in agreement with the assertions in the report that the application did not comply with the relevant planning policies, SPPS 6.200 and 6.201, LC1 and LC1D which sought to protect and where appropriate, restore or improve the quality and the amenity of the landscape.

He explained that the application sought to develop a building and carpark on existing open space that was an Urban Landscape Wedge and that it had not been clearly established that the proposal would bring a substantial community benefit that would outweigh landscape impact or the loss of open space.

He stated that, in terms of open space policy, consideration may be made to balancing other community gains with the loss of open space, however, no such provisions were included in the policy for Urban Landscape Wedges and was contradictory to planning policy as confirmed in Mark Whittaker's (Plans and Policy Team) consultation response.

He reported that the function of the landscape wedge was to provide a visual and physical break between areas of built development and, therefore, any significant development within the Wedge would wholly undermine its fundamental function. He added that the Urban Landscape Wedge aimed to act as a buffer landscape which sought to prevent the merging of different city communities and provide valuable open space for the people of the urban area and had a significant role in helping to define and retain the identities and character of the component parts of the Suffolk, Cloona and Helens Wood urban areas.

He concluded by stating that the recommendation for approval contradicted the advice and guidance from the Council's Landscape and Development Team and its Plans and Policy Unit and that the proposal did not demonstrate the community benefits of losing a valuable open space and developing an Urban Landscape Wedge, identified and depicted as a Community Greenway in the BUAP 2001, dBMAP 2015 (ML23) and LDP 2035.

He stated that Cloona Park/Helens Wood Residents Association considered that the proposal, on balance, was totally unacceptable and urged the Committee to reject the proposal.

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The Chairperson thanked the representatives from Cloona Park/Helens Wood Residents Association for their deputation.

Several Members raised concern with regard to the access and egress of construction traffic related to the proposal and asserted that site access from Stewartstown Road should be considered as a condition of the application.

The Committee agreed to approve the application, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with any other matters which might arise prior to issuing the decision, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2020/2285/O - Two storey detached dwelling with garden and associated parking - Land adjacent to 39 and 40 Stirling Road

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key issues considered in the assessment of the proposed development:

- Principle of development;
- Impact on Amenity;
- Impact on Character and Appearance;
- Flood Risk; and
- Access and parking.

She explained that 11 representations had been received, that included 10 letters of objection and one letter of support, and that the main issues which had been raised referred to road safety, the loss of a turning head, impact and character of the area and the neighbour notification process.

She stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposed development was considered acceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission would be granted, subject to conditions.

The Committee approved the application, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and to deal with any other matters that might arise prior to issuing the decision, provided that they were not substantive.

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New Planning Applications

**LA04/2021/2687/F - Residential development
for 87 no. apartments (1 no. and 2 no. bedroom)
of which 18no. units are affordable housing,
internal car park, landscaped gardens/ terraces
and all associated site works (amended description
and plans). - 3 Milner Street**

The Senior Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key issues:

- Principle of development;
- Design, scale, layout and impact upon the character and appearance of the area;
- Impact on Amenity;
- Affordable Housing and Housing Mix;
- Accessible and Adaptable Accommodation;
- Climate Change;
- Drainage;
- Traffic, Movement and Parking;
- Waste-water Infrastructure;
- Health Impact;
- Ecology;
- Contamination, Air Quality, Noise and other environmental impacts;
- Pre-application Community Consultation; and
- Developer Contributions/Section 76 Agreement.

She stated that the only consultee to offer an objection to the application was NI Electricity and that the issues raised had been addressed. She added that five additional representations had been received following the publication of the Committee report, that cited issues with parking, underprovision of social housing and a desire to see low rise social housing, rather than apartments and that all issues had been raised in previously received representations and had been addressed in the report.

She reported that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered, on balance, to be acceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission was granted.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, Section 76 planning agreement and the response from NIE.

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**LA04/2023/3030/F - Erection of 201-bed
Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation
scheme and retail unit (11-storey) (amended
description and plans). - 41-49 Dublin Road and
3-5 Ventry Street**

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and explained the following key issues that were relevant to consideration of the application:

- Principle of development;
- Scale, Massing and Design;
- Open Space Provision;
- Impact on Built Heritage;
- Traffic and Parking;
- Impact on Amenity;
- Climate Change;
- Health Impact;
- Contamination;
- Air Quality;
- Noise;
- Drainage and Flooding;
- Wastewater infrastructure;
- Waste Management;
- Ecology;
- Developer Contributions/Section 76 Agreement; and
- Pre-application Community Consultation.

She reported that no consultees had offered any objection to the proposal and that the applicant had confirmed that it would provide cycle parking in response to one minor matter raised by DfI Roads, which had stated that 52 cycle stands must be shown in an amended plan. She added that two objections from an adjacent landowner with regard to windows on the boundary had been addressed by the application in the amended scheme.

She stated that it was recommended that planning permission was granted, subject to a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Committee granted planning permission, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building control to finalise the wording of the conditions, Section 76 planning agreement and response to DfI Roads.

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**LA04/2023/4165/F - Vary Conditions 15 and 16 of
LA04/2020/0673/F, relating to trees and landscaping
- Lands at "The Bullring" located parallel to the
Westlink motorway and adjacent Denmark Street/California
Close between Peters Hill and Regent Street**

The Principal Planning Officer explained that the application sought to vary conditions 15 and 16 of planning permission LA04/2020/0673/F, which granted planning permission for environmental improvement works that included new footpaths and cycleway, new multi-use games area, new outdoor gym equipment, new play area, new street furniture and park lighting, relocation of the community garden providing new polytunnel, toilet block, shed and allotment beds, new car park provision, landscape interventions including planting, woodland management, resurfacing, regrading and all associated works.

She stated that the proposal reflected a number of necessary design changes that related to a revised Tree Constraints Layout Plan which reflected where removed trees have been replanted and which trees had been lost as a consequence of vandalism, before contract commencement, and as a result of temporary replanting.

She pointed out that no consultees had offered any objection to the conditions and no representations had been received and that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered to be acceptable.

The Committee approved the application, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, and deal with any other matters that might arise prior to issuing the decision, provided that they were not substantive.

**LA04/2023/2390/F - Section 54 application to vary a number
of conditions to allow the removal of 21
lay-by parking spaces to facilitate the introduction of
a new Vehicle Restraint System (VRS) to the southern
side of the approved east-west spine road. - Lands West
of Monagh By-Pass South of Upper Springfield Road and
30-34 Upper Springfield Road and West of Aitnamona
Crescent & St Theresa's Primary School. North and
East of 2-22 Old Brewery Lane Glanaulin 137-143a Glen
Road and Airfield Heights and St Mary's CBG School**

The Senior Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application which sought planning permission for the variation of a number of conditions on planning approval LA04/2020/0804/F (Glenmona) to allow the removal of 21 lay-by parking spaces to facilitate the provision of a new Vehicle Restraint System (VRS) to the southern side of the approved east-west spine road within a substantial mixed-use scheme that was under construction.

He highlighted the following key issues:

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- Loss of parking;
- Visual impact;
- Impact on amenity; and
- Developer contributions/Section 76 agreement.

He explained that the requirement for a new Vehicle Restraint System, given a drop in levels between an internal road junction and neighbouring residential properties, had resulted in the need for additional space to accommodate the safety feature and that, subsequently, a number of lay-by spaces had to be removed along the main east-west spine road.

He reported that DfI Roads had offered no objection to the removal of the parking spaces and was content that the remaining parking spaces were adequate to serve the approved development.

He stated that it was recommended that the Committee approve the application to remove 21 parking spaces and provide a new Vehicle Restraint System.

The Committee agreed to approve the application, subject to varied conditions that would facilitate the removal of 21 car parking spaces and provide a new vehicle restraint system, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and amend the original Section 76 planning agreement.

**LA04/2023/3462/F - Proposed change of use
of vacant first floor restaurant seating, storage
and ancillary space to amusement and gaming
to facilitate extension to existing ground floor
amusement and gaming premises, 24-28 Bradbury
Place**

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and explained that the site was located within a two-storey building with glass frontage, of a modern design situated within a row of terrace buildings. He added that the site contained a mix of retail, office, bars and restaurants and he highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of the change of use;
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area; and
- Impact on amenity.

She reported that previous approvals had established that, given the city centre location and mixed use of the area as an amusement arcade was suitable in the locations and that there would be no impact on the character and appearance of the area, given that the extension was located on the first floor of the existing building and that there were no proposed changes to the associated frontage.

She stated that it was recommended that the Committee approved the application, subject to conditions.

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The Committee approved the application, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, and deal with any other matters that might arise prior to issuing the decision, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2023/3547/F - Three storey side extension to existing Community Building to provide, Artist's Studio, Gallery Space, Digital Hub on ground and 1st floor and apartment to provide Artist's Residence on 2nd floor, 149-151 Sandy Row

The Senior Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and referred to the following key issues to be considered:

- Principle of the Development;
- Scale, Massing and Design;
- Impact on Neighbouring Amenity;
- Parking;
- Environmental Policies; and
- NI Water.

She explained that the proposed location for the community use was considered appropriate within the city centre, would regenerate a vacant brownfield site and bring substantial community benefits to the surrounding area.

She stated that the surrounding area contained a mix of dwellings and large apartment blocks and that, given the sustainable location, the apartment on the second floor use was considered acceptable and that the scale, massing and design of the extension was considered sympathetic to the surrounding area.

She reported that it was recommended that the application would be approved, subject to conditions.

The Committee approved the application, subject to conditions and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, and deal with any other matters that might arise prior to issuing the decision, provided that they were not substantive.

(Councillor Whyte left the meeting while the following item was under consideration.)

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LA04/ 2023/3832/F- Section 54 application to vary condition No. 4 of LA04/2013/434/F (as amended in PAC decision 2016/A0033) to vary trigger point for provision of community centre. Amended text for this condition: In accordance with the Phasing Plan agreed under Condition 3 and on the occupation of the first residential unit, the Council shall be notified, and no later than six years from that date the Community Centre and associated infrastructure, marked on stamped approved drawing no. 2E, dated 28.08.2015 shall be completed and a report submitted to the Council to verify this, Blacks Gate Development (Former Visteon Factory) Blacks Road

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and explained that the key issue for the assessment of the application was the timing of completion of the approved community centre.

He reported that the first dwelling had been occupied on 29th July, 2021 and that, subsequently, the proposed variation of condition would require that the community centre would be completed by 29th July, 2027, as opposed to 29th July, 2024.

He stated that it was officers' opinion that an extension of time by three years, although unfortunate, would be entirely reasonable, given the circumstances and added that the developer would still be required to provide the community centre which would be secured as part of the approved mixed-use scheme.

The Committee granted planning permission for the variation of condition No. 4, to vary the trigger point for provision of community centre, previously approved as part of a wider mixed-use development including 244no social and private/affordable residential units and class B business units (class B1b/B1c/B2 uses), as follows:

*"In accordance with the Phasing Plan agreed under Condition 3 and on the occupation of the first residential unit, the Council shall be notified, and no later than **six years** from that date the Community Centre and associated infrastructure, marked on stamped approved drawing no. 2E, dated 28.08.2015 shall be completed and a report submitted to the Council to verify this."*

The Committee also delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, and deal with any other matters that might arise prior to issuing the decision, provided that they are not substantive.

(Councillor Whyte returned to the meeting.)

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Restricted Item

The information contained in the reports associated with the following item 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 item as, due to the nature of the item, 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.

Quarter 2 Finance Report

The Director of Planning and Building Control provided the Committee with an update on the Quarter 2 financial position for the Committee, that included a reporting pack with a summary of financial indicators.

The Committee noted the report.

Chairperson

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 7th December, 2023

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson);
Alderman Copeland; and
Councillors Anglin, Bell, Bower, R. Brooks,
T. Brooks, Collins, Doherty, M. Donnelly,
D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Kelly, McAteer,
McCabe, McKeown, Smyth and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer;
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer – Climate;
Mrs. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Ms. M. Quigley, Adaptation and Resilience Advisor;
Mr. S. Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Long.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 9th November, 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of Interest were reported

Variation to Minutes

The Committee noted the following variation to the minutes of 9th November 2023 under the heading:

Kerbside EV Proposal

The representatives from BT Openreach agreed also to undertake to work with the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (IMTAC) with regard to the design and/or evaluation of the technical trial.

Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership

The Committee agreed to the allocation of £30,000 from within the City and Organisational Strategy Budget to develop a food strategy including a comprehensive city-wide and communication plan as part of the Council's food strategy and vision.

Embodied Carbon - Reimagining Construction
[Presentation - Dr Siobhan Cox,
Senior Lecturer School of Natural and
Built Environment, Queens University]

Dr Cox attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

The Committee was provided with an overview of embodied carbon in the context of the construction of buildings. Dr Cox reported that embodied carbon was used from the extraction of materials, operation and refurbishment of buildings culminating in the end of life and demolition process.

The Members were provided with a timeline in connection with each stage of a building's life cycle, including details of the carbon emissions associated with each stage of that process. The Committee was informed that embodied carbon represents approximately fifty percent of the total carbon associated with the life cycle of a building and that globally embodied carbon represents approximately eleven per cent of greenhouse gas emissions associated with new construction.

Dr Cox reported that the World Green Building Council suggested that by 2030, new buildings, infrastructure and renovations to buildings will have approximately forty per cent less embodied carbon with significant up-front carbon reduction and that all new buildings would be required to have net-zero operational carbon.

The Members were informed that currently there were numerous methods used to measure embodied carbon stating that the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) had set out a detailed methodology to calculate whole life carbon from the early design stage through to the project design and project completion. Dr Cox reported that the built environment data base was being used to collect data on carbon emissions and stated that professional bodies were being requested to use the database to estimate the carbon produced in connection with potential development projects and for that data to be shared with other professionals to heighten awareness around embodied carbon.

The Committee was informed that embodied carbon targets were being put in place across Europe to evaluate and reduce embodied carbon. Dr Cox reported that there are a number of targets that could be considered which are targeted at different parts of the building. She stated that it was ambition for buildings to reach an A++ rating by 2050.

Dr Cox emphasised the importance attached to measurement in regard to embodied carbon and the increased use made of recycled materials in the construction process. She referred also to the opportunity to re-purpose existing buildings and of the need to optimise the design of buildings in reducing embodied carbon.

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The Committee was provided with opportunities for the Council to show leadership in this field. Dr Cox referred to the current committed capital programme currently £300 million and the possibilities to calculate and set targets for its embodied carbon production. She referred to opportunities to substitute timber for steel and make use of less virgin materials. The Belfast Stories project was highlighted as a possible development proposal which could be considered for its embodied carbon assessment.

A further area for consideration was the current building control regulation and Council planning policy manifesting in the Belfast Local Development Plan. A reduction in the demolition of building was highlighted as a further area for consideration and the opportunity to re-configure building design allied to modifying the current use of buildings.

A Member referred to the opportunity for the Council to become a civic leader in the area of embodied carbon reduction to make greater use of recycled materials and of the need to publish its results.

The Climate Commissioner confirmed that the Council was exploring ways to measure embodied carbon as part of its draft local development plan and was engaging constructively with the Department of Physical Programmes as part of that process.

A Member asked a further question in regard to liaising with developers in regard to exploring re-use of existing buildings as opposed to demolition and a preference for new build construction. Dr Cox highlighted the need to raise awareness of carbon calculation and the benefits associated with more simplified building design features.

Dr Cox stated that it was important that developers were encouraged to consider embedded carbon as part of their industry standard specification. A Member suggested that the Council might wish to consider how other local authorities, including Liverpool, Manchester and Leeds had approached the problem of reducing embedded carbon.

The Climate Commissioner stated that she would report back to the Committee after consultation with other UK authorities and on the measures under consideration to manage embedded carbon as part of the Belfast Stories development project. The Climate Commissioner agreed also to consult with the Department of Physical Programmes requesting that they work in partnership with Queens University Belfast (QUB) to explore ways in which the Council could reduce its embedded carbon footprint as part of its future capital development programme.

The Committee noted the contents of the presentation and the Chair, on behalf of the Committee, thanked Dr Cox for her detailed and informative presentation and she departed from the meeting.

Passive House Standards at Erne Campus
[Presentation – Dr Barry McCarron,
Head of Business Development, Southwest College]

Dr McCarron attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

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Dr McCarron referred to his role as chairman of the Passive House Association of Ireland and reported that the Erne Campus was the largest passive premium building in the world and that passive house standards was now a global enterprise and provided the Committee with arrange of passive house standard located throughout the world. Dr McCarron reported that the United Nations had recommended passive house design be adopted since 2007.

The Members were informed that forty percent of global emissions was attributed directly to buildings and that there were seventeen sustainable development goals with passive house standards meeting eight of those goals directly and eleven indirectly. He reported that passive house design was the fastest growing building standard and best energy standard in the world. Dr McCarron referred specifically to a developer who was building that two hundred and fifty home to passive house standard in the city currently.

The Committee was informed that there were five passive house standards within the building construction industry. Dr McCarron highlighted the importance of insulation and referred to the key areas of insulation in regard to floors, roofs and walls, with particular attention to thermal bridging points. The Committee was informed of the requirement to undertake triple glazing as standard and ensure that buildings were airtight.

Dr McCarron informed the Committee that the Erne campus used a combination of bio-oil micro-chip and air to water heat pump technology. He referred to the air-quality within the building which was comparable to the quality of the external air and the requirement to ensure sufficient battery storage for period when the sun failed to generate sufficient energy. He stated that the cost of the building equated to thirty million pounds which was £3,552 per m².

The Members were informed that the project members had attended numeral internal events in recognition of their passive house development including Cop 26 and Cop 27. Dr McCarron reported that £300 million pounds of passive house development had been identified in Belfast and that it was cost effective approach, over the long term, given that all existing buildings would require to be retro-fitted if the UK was to meet its climate emission targets.

In response to a question from a Member in regard to the comparative costs of a passive house design building compared to a standard build, Dr McCarron stated that the costs were comparable with standard building costs. Dr McCarron reported that the Belfast building control regulations dictated the uplift in connection with passive house design.

A member raised a further question in regard to the payback period associated with passive house design and construction. In response Dr McCarron reported that the Erne campus was anticipated to secure a saving of two million pounds over a twenty-five-year period. In response to a further question in regard to the Council and its intention to undertake the Belfast Stories development, the Climate Commissioner stated that the project had not adopted one particular standard of passive house design, but agreed to report back to the Committee on how the development would be undertaken in terms of its emissions and embedded carbon output.

The Committee noted the information provided by Dr McCarron and thanked him for his informative and detailed presentation.

**Retain: Sustain programme and short film on
tackling eco anxiety in the wider Belfast Community
[Presentation - Lise McGreevy, Photographic]**

Ms. McGreevy attended in connection with this item and was welcomed by the Chairperson.

Ms. McGreevy informed the Committee that she had been employed as a visual artist over the past 10 years with a commitment to the promotion of peace, a shared future, equality and now climate change. She stated that she was working collaboratively with Queens University Belfast (QUB) as their first 'Artist in Residence'. The Members were informed that her current project proposal was focused on reduce and recycle which should be a fundamental objective for both the business sector and public institutions.

She highlighted the opportunities and advantages of the potential cost benefits to schools and young people through her recycle and reuse initiative. She explained that her concept was based on the principle that all end-of-life and near end-of-life materials had the potential to be recycled with the cost benefits being redistributed to those most in need.

To that end, she reported that she had devised a sustainable programme called Retain/Sustain and that its aim was to assist those companies which adopt the pilot scheme to reduce their recycling costs while promoting their corporate responsibility by helping local communities. She stated that she was actively encouraging global companies to use Belfast as their recycling base with the longer-term objective of those companies adopting the scheme on a global basis and thereby becoming more sustainable and economically viable.

Ms. McGreevy reported that it was her intention to promote a joint venture between the business sector and primary schools in partnership with QUB to undertake a pilot programme working with Espresso. The pilot programme would involve Espresso providing schools with their end-of-life and near end-of-life coffee machines and coffee pods which would be used in schools. She stated that the saving made by using the coffee machines could be directed back into the education system and assist schools in maintaining their education services. The Members were informed that based on the success of phase one of the project proposal, phase two would involve working directly with four schools to assess the viability of the project.

In response to a question from a Member as to whether the scheme was currently operational and if an assessment had been undertaken as to the potential savings for school budgets, Ms. McGreevy stated that no projection could be made until completion of phase one and that the project was a new concept.

In response to a further question on when the project was anticipated to reach a global audience, Ms. McGreevy stated that it would be dependent on the success associated with the pilot study. In response to a further question on funding requirements, Ms. McGreevy reported that she had secured £1,300 to fund the pilot project which would be used to cover the pilot facilitation fees and that phase two involving four selected schools would follow after completion of the pilot study. Ms. McGreevy stated that she was requesting funding from the Council to facilitate phase two of the scheme after completion of phase one.

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The Committee noted the information provided by Ms. McGreevy and informed her that any funding application would be considered in the context of all funding applications made to the Council and would be considered in the context of a business plan which would be set against an agreed funding criterion.

The Committee thanked Ms. McGreevy for her presentation, and she departed from the meeting.

**Local Development Plan
[Presentation - Kate Bentley]**

The Director of Planning and Building Control provided the Committee with an overview of the Council's role as planning authority in the delivery of sustainable development. She reported that climate change and resilience formed a central role in the formation and application of planning policy. The Members were informed that planning policy was required to strike a balance between economic, environmental, and social considerations and of the need to ensure that the right development was undertaken in the right place and at the right time,

The Committee was informed that plans, policies and programmes had been subject to strategic environmental assessment and sustainability appraisal over a considerable period and that the Council's Local Development Plan (LDP) was a key delivery component of the Belfast Agenda. She stated that the objective was to help guide and implement sustainable development over the next fifteen -twenty years.

The Director stated that there were two parts to the LDP namely, the Plan Strategy, which had been adopted in May 2023 and the Local Policies Plan which would look at the allocation of land and zoning within the city. She reported that the Planning Act of 2011 directed that any planning determination must be made in accordance with the LDP unless material considerations determined otherwise, which established the primacy of the LDP in the planning led system.

The Committee was informed that the Plan Strategy contained a number of strategic policies covering a range of areas, including growth and sustainable development, climate change, mitigation and adaptation, which were key elements within the planning strategic policies.

In terms of growth and sustainable development, the Director reported that there were a number of policies, one in particular setting out the growth ambitions contained within the Belfast Agenda, and which needed to be sustainable. She referred specifically to the delivery of thirty-one thousand homes by 2035 and the support of an additional sixty-six thousand inhabitants within the city. The Director emphasised that development required to be sustainable and in the right place. She confirmed that the LDP sat within the context of the Regional Development Strategy.

The Members were informed of the range of strategic policies which were relevant to green and blue infrastructure, and which supported environmental resilience and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. The Director referred to the one hundred and seven operational plan strategy policies in addition to seventeen supplementary planning guidance documents.

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She highlighted specifically some of the operational policies, including flood risk, the accommodation of new homes, mitigating environmental change and sustainable drainage systems. The Members were provided with a timetable for the adoption of the LDP Local Policies Plan and the many challenges which required to be addressed as part of that process.

In response to a question from a member in regard to flexibility of planning policy in the face of a change in emphasis, citing the reduction in the level of office space within the city, the Director stated that policies were long term and the LDP required to have a level of flexibility to accommodate behavioural and social change, including a change in planning priorities.

In response to a further question in regard to embedded carbon calculation being incorporated with planning policy, the Director stated that there was currently a policy within the planning process to make that request but it could not be required as part of the planning process. She stated however, that the planning supplementary guidance could be adjusted, over time, if it was considered necessary to amend it to make other such requests.

The Committee noted the information provided and thanked the Director of Planning and Building Control for her detailed and informative presentation.

**Update on the Belfast Carbon Disclosure Project
Submission 2023 and UK Score Cards
[Presentation Claire Shortt,
Monitoring Learning & Reporting Officer, BCC]**

The Committee considered the undernoted report on the Belfast Carbon Disclosure Project:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update members on the recent award of A status to Belfast through the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP) cities reporting framework and the results of the UK Climate Score Cards.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to note the 2023 CDP award of A status to Belfast, which follows the 2022 award of A status and the 2021 CDP award of B status to Belfast, and to support the annual submission by Belfast through this internationally recognised carbon and climate reporting framework. The Committee is also asked to note the scores for Belfast in the UK Climate Score Cards rankings.

3.0 Main report

Background - Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP)

3.1 In July 2021, the Council made the first annual submission to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), with an update provided to

Council in October 2021 and December 2022. The submission was undertaken to support baselining of activity and emissions in Belfast, and to enable full participation by Belfast in global climate action campaigns such as the Race to Zero, the Cities Race to Resilience campaign, Cities Race to Zero campaign, the Global Covenant of Mayors, and the WWF One Planet City competition. All of these campaigns require members to have made a submission through a recognised reporting mechanism, of which CDP is the most well-known. The survey consisted of multiple questions across themes such as, waste, transport, energy, emissions, climate risk and vulnerability, adaptation, mitigation, public health, planning and finance.

- 3.2 Belfast has been recognised by CDP as one of 119 cities across the globe that is taking bold leadership on environmental action and transparency, despite the pressures of a challenging global economic situation. The process has been designed to encourage and support cities to ramp up their climate action and ambition, CDP's Cities A List is based on environmental data disclosed by cities to CDP-ICLEI Track. A clear momentum in city climate disclosure and action is building – over 900 cities (939 in total) received a rating for their climate action from CDP in 2023. In 2023, just over one in ten cities scored by CDP (13% of such cities) received an A.
- 3.3 A city submission to CDP illustrates the level of ambition, activity and transparency each city adopts. Belfast has made its submission public in all three submission years to ensure maximum openness and transparency around our plans. The Belfast submission in 2021 was the first time Belfast had participated in CDP, and we were congratulated on having achieved a B ranking at such an early stage. In 2022, our second submission achieved an A ranking and this ranking has been preserved in 2023.
- 3.4 Along with the projects mentioned in previous submissions such as the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap (2020), One Million Trees, Living with Water Programme, UPSURGE and the Belfast Tidal Defence Project, the submission this year also included evidence such as the updated Belfast Agenda, the Met Office Heat Maps and the Local Development Plan. The current development of the Climate Action Plan was also highlighted in this submission along with the progress towards a Local Area Energy Plan. Projects such as the solar PV potential in the city and the work around the circular economy helped maintain this year's A ranking.

UK Climate Score Cards

3.5 Climate Emergency UK assessed all UK councils on the actions they've taken towards net zero. The scorecard assessment consists of 91 questions or less, depending on council type, across 7 different sections, created in consultation with over 90 different organisations and individuals. Each council was marked against these criteria and given a right to reply before the scores underwent a final audit. This work was completed between January and August 2023 and results were announced November 2023.

3.6 Belfast scored 43%, ranking number one in N. Ireland with the average ranking in the region being 21% this year. The councils are scored on themes based around building and heating, transport, planning and land use, governance and finance, biodiversity, collaboration and engagement and waste reduction and food.

The link at appendix 6.2 illustrates Belfast's scores across each of the categories and compares them across all other councils.

The questions are answered using information gathered by volunteers that is published and collected through FOIs to councils. This is then combined, and councils get a right to reply to its accuracy.

In 2023, Westminster Council received the highest score in the UK and Thurrock Council received the lowest.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 There are no financial and resource implications.

5.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Implications

5.1 Any good relations or equality implications will be identified as part of the Council's screening process."

The Committee noted that information contained within the report and congratulated the climate team on their dedication and hard work resulting in the achievement of an 'A' ranking in the carbon disclosure project including the impressive results attained within the UK climate scorecard.

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 7th December, 2023**

**Tree Cutting at Orangefield Playing Fields –
Stephen Leonard, Neighbourhood Services Manager**

The Neighbourhood Services Manager provided the Committee with an update on the unauthorised tree felling which had been undertaken by contactors, acting on behalf of NIE, at Orangefield Park in May 2023.

The Committee was informed that NIE has accepted blame for the incident, highlighting a communication failure between NIE and the external contractor. The Members were provided with a written statement from NIE setting out the circumstances surrounding the tree felling and the measures they would be putting in place to repair the damage, including a new tree planting scheme, on site, at no cost to the Council.

A Member referred to a similar incident which had occurred previously and highlighted the lack of consultation with residents and the frustration and anger which had been generated in that local community.

A Member requested that future agreements be strengthened, and that guidance be sought from the City Solicitor in regard the enforcement powers available to the Council to prevent a future occurrence.

In regard to a question from a Member in regard the cost of the restoration work at the park, the Neighbourhood Services Manager agreed to ascertain the costs and report back to the Committee, he agreed also to research from the estates section and the bio - diversity officer, if and when similar incidents of unauthorised tree felling had taken place throughout the city, and what the impact had been for wildlife, specifically in relation to Orangefield Park.

A Member suggested that it might be beneficial to consult with both elected representatives and the local community before any similar operation was undertaken. The Neighbourhood Services Manager assured the Committee that lessons had been learned from this unfortunate incident and that future operations of this nature would be undertaken under Council supervision.

Noted.

Date of Next Meeting

The Committee agreed that its next meeting be held on Thursday, 11th January, 2024 at 5.15 p.m.

Chairperson