

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 22nd November, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); and
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan, Bunting, Cobain,
R-M. Donnelly, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett, Groogan, Long,
Maghie, McDonough-Brown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin,
Nelson and Whyte.

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. K. Heaney, Head of Inclusive Growth and Anti-Poverty;
Mr J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mr Pól Hamilton, Lead Officer, Neighbourhood Services;
and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Councillor de Faoite.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 25th October and 1st 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 November, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Brennan and Groogan declared an interest in item 2(c) Update on Hardship Fund in that they were employed by organisations in receipt of funding; and Councillor McDonough-Brown in that his partner worked for an organisation in receipt of funding and all left the meeting whilst this item was under discussion.

Councillor Brennan declared an interest in item 2(e) Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme Review in that her employer was involved in the Review and left the meeting during discussion on this item.

Councillors Duffy and R-M Donnelly declared an interest in item 8(a) Minutes of the Shared City Partnership in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS in that they worked for organisations which had applied for funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate they were not required to leave the meeting.

Restricted Items

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

The Members were also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential information’ and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Quarter 2 Finance Report 2024/25

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee’s consideration a report providing information on the financial position for Quarter 2 2024/25.

He reported that, at the end of Quarter 2, the financial position for the Council had shown an underspend of £113k, representing 0.13% of the net expenditure budget. The Quarter 2 Departmental forecast was an underspend of £728k, representing 0.4% of the net expenditure budget.

The Director then provided updates on the 2024/25 reserves position, additional vat receipts, the rates finalisation 2024/25 and the capital projects.

The Committee:

- noted the Quarter 2 financial position;
- noted the forecast underspend of £418k and agreed that reallocations of forecast underspends would be considered as part of year end reporting; and
- noted the half year Treasury Management report.

**Revenue Estimates 2025-26 and
Medium-Term Financial Planning**

The Director of Finance submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update on the key issues which influenced the rate setting process for 2025/26 and the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan for 2025/26 till 2028/29. He advised that there were six key elements to the annual setting of the district rate which, under the requirements of the Local Government Finance act, must be struck by 15th February, 2025. He then reviewed each of the areas which were Business as usual Revenue Estimates, the Efficiency Programme, Growth Proposals/Priority Areas, the Capital Finance Budget, the Estimated Penny Product and General Reserves.

The Committee:

- noted the challenges since the last update to be taken into consideration as part of the annual and medium-term rate setting; and
- agreed to monthly rate update reports to enable the striking of the district rate by February 2025.

Update on Hardship Programme 2024/25

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the current position regarding the development and implementation of a 2024-25 Hardship Programme to support those vulnerable people impacted by the cost-of-living crises across the city.

The Committee:

- i. noted the current budget available (£1,100,773) for the development and delivery of a hardship support programme in 2024/25;
- ii. agreed the proposed funding allocation and delivery model as set out at paragraph 3.9 of the report; and
- iii. agreed the proposed extension of the delivery period for the hardship programme to June 2025.

**Housing Led Regeneration Programme-
Appointment of a Private Sector Partner**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the matter for a further period of one week, with a special meeting to be held at 9.30 am on Friday, 29th November.

Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme Review

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the independent evaluation of the Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme (SCDFP) and which requested the Committee to consider the delivery of future programmes.

The Committee:

- i. agreed to defer consideration of the 3 options for the future delivery of the SCDFP to allow for further discussion on the issues which had been raised to be considered by the Party Group Leaders Forum and a report to be brought back to the December meeting of the Committee; and
- ii. agreed to the programme being delivered in a 3-year funding cycle, instead of the current annual application process, which would allow groups adequate time to plan events on an annual basis and use the security of the funding over 3 years to attract additional financial support from other sources to enhance the impact and delivery of their programmes.

Heritage Assets Update

The Committee considered a report which sought approval on a range of assets under the Council's heritage/historic asset base.

The Committee noted the update on the Council's heritage/historic asset base and agreed the following –

- **Wilmont House** – that Wilmont House be added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow for the submission of a grant application by a partner organisation to be taken forward with the Council for the redevelopment of Wilmont House and noted that the Council would seek advice from conservation specialists on the preservation of the building taking into account its current condition;
- **Floral Hall** – that the Floral Hall be added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* as a programme of health and safety works and that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated with the contract to be awarded on the basis of the most economically advantageous tender received and full commitment to deliver;
- **Fernhill House and Courtyard** – that the Council explores options for bringing the Courtyard at Fernhill back into active use space linked to the Access to the Hills project and building on the success of the Forth Meadow Community Greenway and authorised officers to discuss this opportunity with potential partners; and that officers investigate whether the Wolfhill Road project could be linked in as part of the Access to the Hills project also;

- **Historic Cemeteries** –that the Historic Cemeteries be added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* and that further options, including funding options, are explored by Property and Projects and City and Neighbourhood Services; that officers investigate the ownership of the Belvoir Cemetery to see if it could be used a tourist opportunity; and considering the link that the Shankill, Friars Bush and Clifton Street Cemeteries had to the Famine, to check the possible of funding from the Shared Island Fund;
- **Palm House** – noted the update on the Palm House which was on the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* and agreed that a feasibility study be carried out with funding opportunities to be explored; and
- **Historic Tiled Street Signs** – that the Historic Tiled Street Signs project be added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* and approved the submission of a funding application for a pilot refurbishment programme for a number of signs to any funding sources which are identified. Agreed also that officers look at possible funding streams for tiled signage in the parts of the city being developed under the city centre regeneration.

The Committee agreed further that report be submitted to a future meeting on all the Council's listed assets and their condition.

Smart Belfast: City Innovation Programme Update

The Deputy Chief Executive submitted for the Committee's consideration a report on City Innovation initiatives and seeking approval on a number of key projects.

The Committee:

1. noted the success of the £2.5 million Belfast Digital Healthcare Technology Accelerator bid and work under way with Ulster University on maximising its local impact;
2. noted the award of £320,056 of funding to four Belfast companies under the Belfast 5G Innovation Region funding competition;
3. approved a £10,000 budget to support the development of a Belfast bid of up to £2 million to the UK 5G Innovation Regions programme and noted that if a contract was offered by DSIT, this would be brought to Committee for approval;
4. approved the design and delivery of a dissemination event for tourism and BRCD partners on the outworkings of Augment the City with invitations extended to all Members of the Council;
5. approved a financial contribution to the Inclusive Innovation workshop planned for 28 January 2025 and noted that invitations would be extended to all Members of the Council; and

6. approved three-year extensions to the three current roles working in support of the development of business case proposals to the Belfast Region City Deal Digital pillar.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Notice of Motion – Epilepsy – Education and Training

The Members were informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 24th October, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 2nd December:

‘This Council notes the fact that Northern Ireland has the highest prevalence of Epilepsy in the UK.

The Council agrees to consider providing better education about Epilepsy, and training for staff and Councillors in how to deal with seizures and other episodes.’

The motion had been proposed by Councillor Long and seconded by the High Sheriff, Councillor S. Douglas.

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Standing Order 13(i), Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report. Accordingly, the motion was before the Committee as it was responsible for Human Resources and the People Strategy; and the Members’ Development Programme.

The Committee noted that the Motion had been received and agreed that a subsequent report be brought to the Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Motion and the potential costs implications.

Notice of Motion – Blood and Bone Marrow Donations

The Members were informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 24th October, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 2nd December:

‘This Council recognises that donating blood and bone marrow is one of the most precious things a person can do as it can help to save a life. Our Council wants to encourage any eligible staff to take part in regular blood donation by providing them with appropriate time off to do so. This motion requests that we provide our staff with adequate paid time to take part in the selfless act of giving blood and/or to donate bone marrow.

We also request that the Council explores ways in which they can make it easier for staff to donate blood, such as, blood donation events at the workplace.'

The motion had been proposed by Councillor Bower and seconded by Councillor T. Brooks.

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Standing Order 13(i), Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report and was, therefore, before the Committee as it was responsible for Human Resources.

The Committee noted that the Motion had been received and agreed that a subsequent report be brought to the Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Motion and the potential costs implications.

Notice of Motion – NILGOSC – Disposal of Government Bonds

The Members were informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 24th October, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 2nd December:

'This council notes that Northern Ireland Local Government pension provider NILGOSC purchased government bonds from the Israeli government which were being used by the Tel Aviv administration to fund its operations both within Israel and elsewhere.

As the pension provider for all local council workers, the Education Authority, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, NI Libraries and many others including schools, it was a shock to many of the 176,000 members of this pension scheme that it was directly funding the Netanyahu-led government. Given the widespread horror felt by people of all political backgrounds at the targeting of civilians and children by the Israeli government in the war in Gaza the use of workers' and public sector money in a loan to the Israeli government was and is unacceptable.

Belfast City Council expresses its deep concern at the decision to purchase these bonds, welcomes the fact they have now been divested, and will write to NILGOSC requiring that purchase of Israeli government bonds is never repeated.

Belfast City Council will commission an independent report evaluating the relationship between the council and NILGOSC, the performance of the NILGOSC fund when compared to similar pension funds, all contributions made by the council to the fund, including how they are impacted by the fund's performance.'

The motion had been proposed by Councillor Whyte and seconded by Councillor Doherty.

The Committee noted that, in accordance with Standing Order 13(i), Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate Committee for consideration and report, which in this case was the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as it was responsible for financial matters.

Proposal

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

That the Committee agrees to write to NILGOSC on the terms as set out in the motion and that a report be brought back to the Committee in relation to the other issues which had been raised.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the Committee agrees, in the first instance, to write to NILGOSC to ascertain if the decision to divest the government bonds which had been purchased from the Israeli government had been as a result of political pressure.

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 Whyte and seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin was put to the meeting when thirteen Members voted for it and five against and it was declared carried.

Governance

Schedule of Meetings 2025

The Committee approved the schedule of meetings set out below and agreed to the holding of additional special meetings, if required, to consider the rate-setting process, on dates to be determined in consultation with the Chairperson:

- Friday 17th January at 9.30 a.m. (Rate setting, if required)
- Friday 24th January at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday 21st February at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday 21st March at 9.30 a.m.

- Friday 18th April at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday, 23rd May at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday 20th June at 9.30 a.m.
- No monthly meeting in July
- Friday 22nd August at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday 19th September at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday 24th October at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday 21st November at 9.30 a.m.
- Friday 19th December at 9.30 a.m.

**Change of Date of Council Meeting in
January and Schedule of Meetings 2025**

The Committee agree to move the Council meeting in January from Thursday 2nd January to Thursday 9th January, 2025 and noted the schedule of meetings as set out below:

- Thursday 9th January at 6.00 p.m.
- Monday 3rd February at 6.00 p.m.
- Monday 3rd March at 6.00 p.m.
- Tuesday 1st April at 6.00 p.m.
- Thursday 1st May at 6.00 p.m.
- Monday 2nd June at 6.00 p.m. – Annual Meeting
- Monday 1st July at 10.45 a.m. – Special: Somme Commemoration
- Monday 1st July at 6.00 p.m.
- No monthly meeting in August
- Monday 1st September at 6.00 p.m.
- Wednesday 1st October at 6.00 p.m.
- Monday 3rd November at 6.00 p.m.
- Monday 1st December at 6.00 p.m.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Women's Safety in the City

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Members on recent committee discussions and other meetings related to addressing the issue of violence against women and girls and possible interventions to improve women’s safety in the city.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Consider the discussions held and decisions taken at the People and Communities and City Growth and Regeneration Committees (November 2024);
- Note the cross-departmental and cross sectoral work being delivered by, supported, or endorsed by the council;
- Note the multi-agency stakeholders currently involved in this work and the discussions which took place at the Multi-Agency Operational Task Force on the City Centre which took place on 13 November 2024;
- Agree short-term interventions to support women's safety in greater Belfast, together with plans for further engagement with stakeholders to develop further interventions for implementation in the medium term and that these form part of considerations for use of in-year underspend or external funding, if applicable.

3.0 Background and Main Issues

3.1 Members have discussed the important issues of ending violence against women and girls and improving safety for women in several recent committee meetings. This has included:

3.2 Discussion of The Executive Office (TEO) Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Funding Initiative – 2024-2026 which was discussed at SP&R committee on 25 October 2024;

The Women's Night Safety Charter, discussed at SP&R meeting on 25 October 2024;

Proposal raised by Cllr Ruth Brooks at the People and Communities Committee on 5 November 2024 that:

...officers (should) examine existing budgets and funding streams with a view to identifying initiatives that would support women's safety in greater Belfast. It was agreed also that a report in this regard be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 22nd November, for consideration.

3.3 In addition, the People and Communities Committee agreed that, in conjunction with the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, a special meeting be convened to which a range

of stakeholders would be invited to consider city-wide and multi-agency initiatives to support women's safety in greater Belfast. The proposals were also raised at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee by Cllr Tracy Kelly where they were endorsed.

- 3.4 This report is intended to fulfil the Committees' request for a report to be brought to SP&R Committee, as outlined above, and provide an update on activity currently underway by council, partners and other stakeholders in this space.
- 3.5 Appendix 1 contains information about the range of council activity currently underway.

This work cuts across a number of partnerships and programmes and includes:

- Onus Safe City Award;
 - White Ribbon Charter;
 - Onus Workplace Charter on Domestic Violence - Platinum level;
 - Actions within the Gender Action Plan 2024-27;
 - Delivery of the Local Change Fund and Regional Grant Programme as part of TEO's Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategic Framework;
 - Programme of projects funded by and delivered through the PCSP structures; and
 - Delivery of interventions, advice and guidance to end violence against women and girls within the Wider University & Lower Ormeau (WULO) Action Plan.
- 3.6 These initiatives provide a useful foundation upon which to build future interventions in partnership with relevant stakeholders and support groups.

Update since Committee Discussions

- 3.7 When the issue was raised, Members at the People & Communities and City Growth & Regeneration Committees were concerned that actions should be identified, if possible, in advance of the Christmas period. A meeting of the Multi-Agency Operational Task Force on the City Centre subsequently met on Wednesday 13 November 2024, attended by DfC, DfI, PSNI, Linen Quarter BID, Cathedral BID, Belfast One, Retail NI, Belfast Chamber and Belfast City Council. At this meeting partners provided a number of updates about activity in the run up to Christmas including:

- Distribution of personal safety alarms to the Linen Quarter BID, with a request for additional funding being brought forward to PCSPs for the purchase and supply of additional devices;
 - Partnership working with UU and QUB, with a student safety survey having been undertaken and the Community Safety team hosting a number of pop-up safety events and supplying a number of personal safety alarms to students.
 - The commencement of the PSNI Christmas Programme of activity and
 - BCC Safe Neighbourhood Officers are planning additional programming over the December period which will see an increase visibility of PSNI and SNOs throughout the day and evening.
- 3.8 The BCC Women's Steering Group, which includes elected Members and officers met on 11 November 2024 and together with the Women's Network, will consider the possibility of aligning further resource to their action plan particularly those actions designed to highlight the issue of EAWG including the programme of activity related to International Women's Day. Information has also been circulated in respect of the Reclaim the Night march on Saturday 30 November 2024.
- 3.9 An internal officer meeting was also held to consider suggestions made by Members at Committee, including the provision of self defence classes in community facilities and the provision of alarms. It has been confirmed that alarms can be covered from within existing PCSP budgets and it is likely that the initial provision of self defence classes will be under £5,000 and it is anticipated this can be found within existing departmental spend limits.
- 3.10 It is intended that further engagement will take place with stakeholders to discuss further potential interventions so that these can be considered as part of any future discussion around the use of in-year underspend and to take advantage of any external funding opportunities.
- 3.11 In previous years, anti-spike kits were procured through the PCSP with the aim of distributing to licensed premises across the city. When this proved difficult to implement, the kits were distributed to women and girls through community organisations. Consideration is also being given to whether kits should be made available at council-run events and other events on council land.

- 3.12 This year saw the delivery of EmpowHER workshops which included safety information to women and girls, including personal alarms. It is proposed that officers work with local community groups and our own Community Services Team to ensure the distribution of the remaining personal alarms before Christmas.

On-going engagement

- 3.13 Belfast City Council host and/or participate in a range of multi-agency forums which focus on safety issues and concerns, they include:

- Police and Community Safety Partnerships
- Multi-Agency Operational Task Group
- City Centre Tasking Group (Community Safety)
- Strategic Leadership Group including Complex Lives
- Community Safety Forums across Belfast
- Night Time Volunteer Group

- 3.14 With the limited time before the Christmas period and the range of multi-agency meetings currently taking place it may be difficult to get the same stakeholders together to host a conversation on women's safety.

- 3.15 Given this, the opportunity will be taken to include 'Women's Safety' and 'Ending Violence Against Women and Girls' to the above multi agency meeting agendas to ensure coordination of initiatives and strategies.

- 3.16 Arrangements will be made for the specific joint meeting of People and Communities Committee and City Growth and Regeneration Committee with stakeholders, which was requested at the November People and Communities meeting as soon as possible following council ratification.

Safer Socialising Initiative and Women's Night Safety Charter

- 3.17 Members will recall that at its October meeting the Committee received a request to approve the Council's involvement in the Safer Socialising Initiative and for the organisation to sign up to the Women's Night Safety Charter. Members deferred for consideration of the matter to enable further information to be provided. Members are asked to note that a meeting between Members and Hospitality Ulster is being arranged.

Related Notices of Motion

- 3.18 At the SP&R meeting on 25 October 2024, Members asked that an update on related notices of motion be provided to the committee. An overview of these motions including their latest status will be brought to the December SP&R meeting.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.19 The immediate cost implications of this report can be met from within existing departmental expenditure limits.

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

- 3.20 The proposals are intended to support the safety of women and girls in the city.”

The Committee:

- noted the discussions held and decisions taken at the People and Communities and City Growth and Regeneration Committees (November 2024);
- noted the cross-departmental and cross sectoral work being delivered by, supported, or endorsed by the Council;
- noted the multi-agency stakeholders currently involved in this work and the discussions which had taken place at the Multi-Agency Operational Task Force on the City Centre which took place on 13 November 2024;
- agreed short-term interventions to support women’s safety in greater Belfast, together with plans for further engagement with stakeholders to develop further interventions for implementation in the medium term and that these form part of considerations for use of in-year underspend or external funding, if applicable;
- agreed to investigate as to whether the Council could fund additional security measures; and
- agreed that officers ascertain which agency/organisation had responsibility to deal with unlicensed taxis.

Planning Update

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on major planning applications and applications which had been determined by the Planning Committee.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Council’s Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council’s Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents requests for stage movement approvals under the Capital Programme, along with updates on capital planning, the temporary container at Cathedral Gardens and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Capital Programme and Capital Financing 2025/26 – Note the update on the Capital Programme and Capital Financing 2025/26.**
- **Capital Programme Stage Movements:**
 - **St George’s Market – New Stalls – Agree that the project is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.**
 - **Waterfront Hall Chiller Units - Agree to move the project to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.**
 - **Innovation Factory Access Control – Agree to move the project to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.**

- **Cathedral Gardens** – Note that the temporary active travel container at Cathedral Gardens will be relocated to Strangford Avenue, subject to final installation arrangements.
- **Shared Prosperity Fund** – Note the update on Shared Prosperity Funding for 2024/25.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Capital Programme and Capital Financing 2025/26

In March 2024 Members agreed to a series of workshops regarding future capital priorities linked to the medium-term financial planning process. To prepare for this it is agreed that a series of Party Group Briefings are to be held to update Members on the existing Capital Programme, ascertain future priorities to determine the level of financing required, as well as exploring the implications of any future investment decisions and the potential impact on the district rate. These briefings are now being scheduled for late November and early December in line with the rates setting process for 2025/26.

As Members will be aware, the Capital Programme has an expenditure horizon of around three years. CIPFA capital planning guidance recommends taking a longer-term view (8-10 years). The Council is continuing to adopt this best practice approach for the Capital Programme, alongside the standard planning for short to mid term programme requirements in 2025/26. Work as usual still continues, and any project at an appropriate stage of readiness is still brought before Members via the three stage approvals process.

This activity feeds through to the planned consultation on the draft Corporate Plan in early 2025, and the target date of March 2025 to publish the Corporate Plan.

Members are asked to note the update on Capital Programme and Capital Financing 2025/26.

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

- 3.2** Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. Members are advised that the Property & Projects Department is happy to

arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.

Members have agreed that all capital projects must go through a three-stage process where decisions on which capital projects progress are taken by the Committee. This provides assurance as to the level of financial control and will allow Members to properly consider the opportunity costs of approving one capital project over another capital project. Members are asked to note the following activity on the Capital Programme:

Project	Overview	Stage movement
St George's Market – New Stalls	Replacement of market stalls in St George's Market.	Move to Stage 3 – Committed
Waterfront Hall - Chiller Units	Replacement of the chiller units at the Waterfront Hall to ensure adequate cooling for events and operational requirements.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted
Innovation Factory Access Control System	Procurement of a replacement for the access control system at the Innovation Factory.	Move to Stage 2 – Uncommitted

3.3 St George's Market – New Stalls

In March 2024, SP&R Committee agreed that St George's Market – New Stalls project be moved to Stage 2 – Uncommitted to allow a business case to be developed. The project is for the replacement of the 180 market stalls in St Georges Market. The current stalls are more than 18 years old and many are in a poor state of repair, presenting a health and safety risk both for staff and for traders. An Outline Business Case has now been worked up in line with the three stage approvals process.

Members are asked to agree that 'St George's Market – New Stalls' is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return; and that necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders

and/or the use of appropriate ‘framework’ arrangements) be initiated with contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

Waterfront Hall – Chiller Units

- 3.4 The existing chiller units at the Belfast Waterfront Hall have reached the end of their economic life. The proposal is to replace the existing chiller units with high efficiency equivalents to improve performance and resilience. An Outline Business Case will now be worked up on the proposal.

Members are asked to agree that ‘Waterfront Hall – Chiller Units’ is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

Innovation Factory Access Control

- 3.5 The project is for the replacement of the access control system at Innovation Factory. The current system is no longer fit for purpose. As previously advised, this project is progressing at pace. There is a requirement to upgrade the system which includes new door controllers, readers, and associated software. An Outline Business Case will now be worked up on the proposal.

Members are asked to agree that ‘Innovation Factory Access Control’ is moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* to allow the options to be fully worked up, with further detail to be brought back to Committee in due course.

Cathedral Gardens

- 3.6 Members will be aware that the Cathedral Gardens project is at *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* on the Capital Programme. A temporary Active Travel Hub had been installed in the space via external funding comprising two shipping containers. Members will recall that the hub was a temporary measure rather than part of the overall masterplan for Cathedral Gardens. Sustrans held a temporary licence to provide active travel services at the hub, which has now expired. The containers can be relocated for use elsewhere.

Relocation of the containers to Strangford Ave Playing Fields would complement recent works to improve accessibility for people with disabilities, including replacement of gates and

extending pathways, and the creation of a loop suitable for wheelchairs and adapted bikes. This site is situated across the road from a school campus shared by four disability schools which cater for 660 young people who have a physical or learning disability. Although recent improvements have been welcomed, the logistics of transporting pupils and bikes to and from the park is incredibly challenging and has proved unsustainable. The bike storage container will provide a location for bikes to be stored, including adapted bikes for pupils with a physical disability and will enable a disability bike programme to be delivered from the park. The containers can also allow a wider outdoor recreational programme to be developed, supported by CNS Department.

Members are asked to note that the temporary active travel container at Cathedral Gardens will be relocated to Strangford Avenue, subject to final installation arrangements.

Shared Prosperity Fund

- 3.7 Members will recall that in September the Council received a report on a funding opportunity under the Shared Prosperity Fund (SPF) for 2024/25. The Council has since been successful in securing the full allocation of £1,787,615 for Belfast. The funding received is for the list of activities as agreed by Members, namely: pitch improvements; playgrounds improvements; Vacant to Vibrant scheme; feasibility studies for key city centre sites and assets; and a programme of animation, lighting enhancements and marketing linked to key city events (e.g. Halloween, Christmas). Work is complete on several of the activities - this approach was permissible under the eligibility criteria, and work is underway on the delivery of the remaining activities for completion by end March 2025.

Members are asked to note the update on Shared Prosperity Funding for 2024/25.

3.8 Financial & Resource Implications

Financial Implications – A financial allocation of £1,787,615 is secured for the SPF activities in 2024/25.

Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver.

3.9 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Assets Report

The Committee:

i) Ulster Hall – Agreement for Rory Gallagher Statue

- Approved an agreement between the Council and The Rory Gallagher Statue Project Trust for the gifting of a Rory Gallagher Statue to be located at the Ulster Hall; and
- Approved a short-term licence agreement between Council and Martin Contracting Services Ltd for the statue installation and associated base at the Ulster Hall.

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ii) Dromara Street and Balfour Avenue – Licence Agreement and Easement

- Approved a licence and an easement for installation and siting of gas mains / apparatus at Dromara Street Open Space and Balfour Avenue Open Space between the Council and Phoenix Energy Group Limited.

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iii) Kent Street Car Park – Licence Agreement

- Approved the renewal of a Licence agreement from the Department for Communities in relation to the Council operated off-street car park at Kent Street.

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iv) Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre – Agreements

- Approved a short-term month to month licence agreement between the Council and Streetbeat Youth Project for its use of Upper Ardoyne Youth Centre and a lease agreement thereafter if approval is obtained from DfC; and
- Approved the submission of an application to the Department for Communities to seek approval for a rent at less than best value.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in appendix 1 (table 1) below;
- approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in appendix 1 (table 2); and
- approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in appendix 1 (table 3):

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Framework Agreement for Goods for Resale at Belfast Zoo. Previously approved Feb 2024 for £520,000 but has now been reviewed.	Up to 4 years	£832,000 (Costs recouped via sales/income)	D Martin	Supply of a range of goods (i.e. toys, souvenirs etc) to sell in shops at Belfast Zoo.
Supply of mechanical sweeper brushes	Up to 3 years	£380,000	D Sales	To support vehicle maintenance for street cleaning and sweeping.
A new Folder inserter for NIHE, and internally for council departments. Previously approved SP&R Sept 2024 for up to 2 years at £110,000. Both duration and value now been reviewed.	Up to 5 years	£155,000	P Gribben	This project aims to enable Digital Services to continue to provide SLA mail processing service for NIHE, and internally for council departments. All revenue costs are covered by DS budget.
Belfast City & Region Place Partnership (BCRPP) Framework	Up to 4 years	Framework value £4,000,000 BCC contribution 2024/25 £80,000	D Martin	This multi-supplier framework agreement will allow BCC, as the lead partner of the BCRPP, to engage a pre-qualified supplier on a needs led basis, ensuring that each call-off contract represents best value for the partnership. The BCRPP Partnership is delivered as a public private sector sponsorship fund, which includes a BCC

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
				contribution of £80,000 for the 2024 / 2025 programme, as approved by CG&R Committee, June 2024. External funding will form the majority of this overall budget.
Collection, treatment and disposal of hazardous waste	Up to 4 years	£500,000	D Sales	This service ensures that dumped hazardous wastes and those brought to BCC recycling centres are identified, collected, treated and disposed of by specialist and trained contractors in line with legislation.
Search tool for the Council external website	Up to 3 years	£50,000	P Gribben	Belfast City Council has emphasised their search function since the implementation of an updated website in 2020. This is well used, with an average of almost 119,000 searches a year on our website. These have resulted in an average of over 51,000 clicks (43.59% click through rate)

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
Port Health Interactive Live Information System (PHILIS) (Fully Funded)	Up to 2 years	£75,749	P Gribben	Extend the utilisation of the Port Health Interactive Live Information System (PHILIS) which has become the industrial	East Suffolk Council	3

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
				standard for Port Health. No other supplier exists for digitised Food Import system. We currently use PHILIS system.		
Support and maintenance for MapInfo mapping software	Up to 3 years	£51,750	P Gribben	The platform has been extensively used to provide developed functionality and projects. It would be a major exercise to replace or change this product and the costs and risk would be prohibitive.	CDR Group	3
Visit Belfast enhanced key event marketing and promotion	Up to 5 months	£115,000	D Martin	Visit Belfast has an extensive knowledge, unique media partnerships and buying power for a greater out of state campaign and reach not achievable by Council.	Visit Belfast	3

Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Duration	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
T1998 (3) - Provision of catering at the Stables Café. Income based contract - approx £20,000 pa income	Up to 5 years	Additional 1 month and £1,500 (income)	S Leonard	A one month contract extension is required for the current contract to align it with the proposed start date of the new contract which is being tendered.	USEL
T2544 - Art of Reconciliation for Belfast 2024	Up to 4 months	Additional 3 months	D Martin	Contract duration extended to include performance during Belfast International Arts Festival. No increase in value.	Féile an Phobail
T2138 - Provision of Taxi Services	Up to 3 years	Additional 6 months	T Wallace	Extension required to allow for a reassessment of the current specification to develop a more efficient method of invoicing and payment processes for both supplier and council staff and finance team.	Value Cabs

Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 11th November 2024

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 11th November 2024, including:

Presentation from Active Communities Network

- To note the contents of the presentation detailed in the minutes.

Presentation from Victims Support NI

- To note the contents of the presentation detailed in the minutes.

Shared City Partnership Membership – Verbal Update

- The Shared City Partnership noted and agreed the update provided by the Good Relations Manager, recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the update.

Community Recovery Fund Update

- The Partnership noted and agreed and recommends the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to agree the Community Recovery Fund Action Plan.

TEO Asylum Dispersal Funding and Refugee Integration Funding

- The Partnership recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.

PEACE IV – Secretariat Update

- The Partnership notes the contents of the report and recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.

PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan – Update

- The Partnership recommends to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it notes the contents of the report.
- Members approved the Community Recovery Fund plan, with the exception of area plans.

A Member requested under item Community Recovery Fund (Section Area Based – CRF008) that additional data and information be taken back to the Strategic Policy and Resources to agree the geographically areas which should be included in the development of mini area plans and the Committee agreed accordingly.

Operational Issues

**Minutes of 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 14th November.

**Requests for use of the City Hall
and the provision of Hospitality**

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
2025 Functions					
Blackie River Community Organisations	25 January 2025	Student Graduation for adult learners on achievement of health and social care level 3 to childcare management level 5. The event will promote community-based education programmes for adult learners. Numbers attending – 100	C & D	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity
Invest NI	5 February 2025	Business Networking evening for NI business influencers, Invest NI client companies, Ulster Rugby management/players Australian visitors: players/managers/sponsors from Queensland Reds Rugby team. Numbers attending – 60 – 80	A & B	Room hire £450	No hospitality as Government Dept.

Money and Pension Service – Dept of Work and Pensions	19 February 2025	Scam/ Fraud Consumer advice showcase to offer guidance on scam/fraud concerns, share approaches, best practice and support available for organisations and consumers. Aim is to work together to help reduce the numbers of people falling foul of scams/frauds. Numbers attending – 200	D	Room hire £450	No hospitality as Government Dept.
Department of Health	20 February 2025	Celebration for Early Years Practitioners - those who work with babies and young children in Belfast. For all those practitioners who work in our community, voluntary and statutory childcare Numbers attending – 150	C	Room hire £450	No hospitality as Government Dept.
Cairde Bhunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin	28 February 2025	Night of Celebration for 30th Anniversary of Bunscoil Bheann Mhadagáin - Reception, Dinner, Speeches, entertainment and dancing. Numbers attending – 200 - 250	C & D	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Wine and Soft Drink reception as significant anniversary

**Minutes of the Meeting of the
Cost of Living Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Cost of Living Working Group of 12th November.

Chairperson