

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 13th December, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murphy (Chairperson); and
Alderman McCoubrey;
Councillors Beattie, Black, Brennan, Bunting, Cobain,
de Faoite, 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;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and
Neighbourhood 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. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 22nd and 29th 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 2nd December, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee and subject also to the amendment of the minute of the meeting of 22nd November, under the heading 'Heritage Assets Update', to reflect the addition of the gate lodge at the Falls Park within those sites identified for consideration within the expression of interest process.

The Committee noted also that, at the meeting of 29th November, the Chief Executive had reported the appointment of Keith Harper as Director of Economic Development.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Groogan, R-M Donnelly and Duffy declared an interest in item 7(b) 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 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 item 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.

Revenue Estimates 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Planning

The Committee:

- Agreed to defer consideration of the report until January;
- Noted that it had previously 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; and
- Agreed to the holding of a special Council meeting, if required, to strike the rate.

Summer Community Diversionsary Festival Programme Review

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

The SCDFP evaluation report presented 3 options for members consideration on the purpose of the future delivery of the SCDFP:

- a. Summer Programme supporting any organisation that wants to develop diversionary activities and/or celebrate culture throughout July and August; or
- b. Summer Programme that supports groups to develop diversionary activities and/or programmes that celebrate culture around the 11th, 12th July and 8th August (with a 7-day window in and around dates to run activities); or
- c. Summer Programme that supports groups to develop diversionary activities and/or programmes that celebrate culture around the 11th, 12th July and 8th August (however they can run activities throughout July until 8th August with the emphasis still on those dates).

In addition, the Committee was asked to give consideration to the future name of the programme:

- i. Summer Community Diversionary Festival Programme (No change); or
- ii. Summer Community Diversionary **and** Festival Programme; or
- iii. Summer Community Diversionary Programme.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Beattie,
Seconded by Councillor R-M Donnelly,

That, in relation to the future delivery, the Committee agrees to adopt option B.

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

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor Long,
Seconded by Councillor Nelson,

That the Committee agrees the future delivery be a Summer Programme that supports groups to develop diversionary activities and/or programmes that celebrate culture around the 11th, 12th July and 8th August, with a 14-day window before and a 7-day after those dates to deliver activities.

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

Accordingly the Committee agreed that:

- I. the name of the programme be changed to the Summer Community Diversionary Programme;
- II. the future delivery be a Summer Programme that supports groups to develop diversionary activities and/or programmes that celebrate culture around the 11th, 12th July and 8th August, with a 14-day window before and a 7-day after those dates to delivery activities; and
- III. The definition of 'community diversionary activity':
 - The Summer Community diversionary programme provides support for the delivery of community-based diversionary and festivals programmes. All funded activity will make a significant contribution to the reduction of anti-social behaviour linked to key areas, bonfires and dates over the summer period specifically 11th July and 8th August.
- IV. the criteria for the application process include:
 - how the proposal will be diversionary around the two contentious periods of the summer.
 - How the proposed diversionary activity will reduce summer community tension and ASB.
 - How the proposal will reduce anti-social behaviour or reduce community tension in the areas where the proposal is being delivered.
 - How the project will promote positive cultural expression by increasing participants sense of community belonging and celebrating cultural diversity.
 - Providing evidence of project planning and management arrangements for the proposal including project expenditure.

World Irish Dancing 2026 bid

The Committee acceded to the request from ICC Belfast to provide financial support towards the costs associated with hosting the World Irish Dancing Championships in 2026.

Assets Management

The Committee:

- i) **2 Royal Avenue – 'The Knotted Gun' Sculpture Relocation**
 - Noted the re-location of 'The Knotted Gun' sculpture from Belfast City Council lands at Girdwood Community Hub to Council lands at 2 Royal Avenue.

ii) Fullerton Park Pavilion – Licence Agreement

- Approved a licence agreement with the Dunmurry Community Association for use of the Fullerton Park Pavilion.

iii) Ballygomartin Road Site - Acquisition of land at Springfield Heights

- Approved the acquisition of land at Springfield Heights from the Crown Estate.

iv) North Foreshore – Lease and related agreements to Dargan Road Biogas Ltd or related company

- Noted that, in line with the Committee’s decision of August 2018, detailed terms for a lease and related legal agreements had been agreed with Dargan Road Biogas Ltd or related Energia Group company, for the development and operation of an Anaerobic Digestion facility on a site of approximately 10.79 acres and approved the extended site size and lease term of 25 years with any other terms to be agreed by the Estates Manager and the City Solicitor.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Notices of Motion – Quarterly Update

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services submitted for the Committees consideration the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee on the progress of all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance for which SP&R Committee is responsible for.**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:**

- **Note the updates to all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance that SP&R Committee is responsible for and**
- **Agree to the closure of Notice of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance 25, 171, 195, 225, 257, 280, 283, 300, 325, 331, 341, 359, 386 and 400 as referenced in Appendix 1 and paragraph 3.4 below.**

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 At SP&R Committee on 25th October 2019, the following Notice of Motion was agreed:

'That this Council notes that other Councils produce a monthly status report in relation to Notices of Motion; and agrees Belfast City Council adopts a similar practice and produces a monthly Notice of Motion Update which will be brought to each full Council Meeting, detailing the following:

- 1. Date received**
- 2. Notice of motion title**
- 3. Submitted by which Councillor**
- 4. Council meeting date**
- 5. Committee motion is referred to**
- 6. Outcome of committee where Notice of Motion will be debated**
- 7. Month it will be reported back to committee**
- 8. Other action to be taken.'**

3.2 Following a review exercise, a new database containing all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance at Committee was created and quarterly reporting to Committee commenced in March 2021. Appendix 1 is the latest quarterly update showing all active Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance which SP&R Committee is responsible for.

Closure of Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance

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

- Notices of Motion which contained an action(s) that has been completed; and**
- Notices of Motion have become Council policy.**

3.4 SP&R Committee are asked to agree that the following Notice of Motions and Issues Raised in Advance are now closed:

Category 1 Recommended Closure:

- City Cemetery Bi-Lingual Signage (257) -This Issue Raised in Advance called for dual language signage to be installed at the City Cemetery and interim measures to be adopted to facilitate this for the opening. Dual language signage on the visitor centre is now complete and external dual language signs have been installed**

across the cemetery grounds. Therefore it is recommended that this Issue Raised in Advance is now closed.

- **Levelling Up Fund (300)** – This Issue Raised in Advance called for a report to be submitted outlining the lessons learned from the unsuccessful bid to secure levelling up funding during Round 2. Since the announcement of Levelling Up Fund Round 3 and the fact that this did not apply to Northern Ireland, Ministers opted to fund one additional LUF culture project in Northern Ireland, drawing from the list of bids submitted in Round 2. The Shore Road Skills Centre was selected at a value of £2.2 million. It is recommended that this Issue Raised in Advance is now closed.
- **Request for Artwork to celebrate the ‘Irish Goodbye’ film (325)** – This Issue Raised in Advance called for a report be submitted on the provision of artwork in the City to mark the success of this film. Belfast 2024 and Belfast Stories collaborated to deliver this and the artwork is being completed and it will be situated looking over the Belfast Stories site. There will be an official launch on Monday 30th September. Therefore it is recommended that this Issue Raised in Advance is now closed.
- **Save West Wellbeing Suicide Awareness (331)** – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to explore options to fund the West Wellbeing Suicide Prevention Centre, including using reserve funds, if necessary, to source up to £50,000 so the organisation could continue to deliver its full range of services. A paper was brought to SP&R on 19th April where Committee further discussed and agreed that the request be dealt with via the discretionary payments process. The Discretionary payment process opened at the end of June and closed on 2nd August. West Wellbeing Suicide Awareness did not apply for funding. Therefore it is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.
- **Childcare Provision (341)** – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to carry out a review as to how they can support childcare provision in the area, including reviewing whether schemes supported by the Council during school holidays can be expanded. Whilst Council host a number of summer and play schemes, childcare is a very specific function with registration required with the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust and

as such, BCC do not provide childcare schemes. In addition, support of £80,000 was agreed by SP&R Committee in February 2024 to support the enhancement of provision of summer schemes for children with additional needs for delivery in summer 2024. Therefore it is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.

- **Request for BCC to act as a Sponsor for a Community Asset Transfer for West Belfast Partnership Board (359)** – This Issue Raised in Advance asked for the Council to act as a sponsor for a community asset transfer for the West Belfast Partnership Board. This request has been agreed and LPS notified. Therefore it is recommended that this Issue Raised in Advance is now closed.
- **Agricultural Fines for Pollution (386)** – This Notice of Motion requested that the Council call on the DAERA Minister to reinstate the previous more stringent penalties in relation to repeated negligent breaches to more accurately reflect the environmental harm caused. This Notice of Motion was carried at full Council. Therefore it is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.

Category 2 Recommended Closure:

- **Abortion Imagery (25)** – This Issue Raised in Advance called on the Council to investigate whether the public display of graphic abortion imagery in the city centre can be regulated lawfully. The Council undertook initial engagement with the Department for Communities and obtained legal advice on the draft byelaws. On 26 June 2023 the SP&R Committee agreed that the draft bye laws be issued for formal public consultation. Consultation commenced on 27 November 2023 and concluded on 4 March 2024. There was an extremely high level of response to this consultation and officers are currently working on analysing the responses in preparation for drafting a report on the consultation findings. Therefore it is recommended that this Issue Raised in Advance is now closed.
- **10% Pay Increase for Council Workers (171)** – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to support the pay claim submitted by Trade Unions, representing all public sector staff, for a substantial increase and to meet with local NJC union representatives to convey support for the pay claim and consider practical ways

in which the Council can support the campaign. The Pay & Grading proposal for staff on Belfast City Council Terms & Conditions was accepted by the Trade Unions on 20th June 2024 and communicated to staff. Planning for the next phase of the project has commenced. This seeks to harmonise the remaining outstanding Single Status matters where practicable.

- As the work to address the overall pay and grading structure is completed it is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.
- **Chat Bench and Tackling Loneliness (195)** – This Notice of Motion called on the Council to re-purpose two council owned benches as ‘Happy to Chat Benches’. One in the grounds of City Hall and one in the Titanic quarter. Council does not own a bench at Titanic Quarter and will consider the re-purposing of the bench at City Hall at the City Hall Working Group. In addition there are already chatty benches in Marrowbone Park, Ligoniel Park, Glencairn Park, Woodvale Park and Waterworks Park. Therefore it is recommended that this Notice of Motion is now closed.
- **City Centre Built Heritage (225)** – This Issue Raised in Advance called on the Council to engage with the owner of a building of architectural and historical significance in the inner North of the City, which was currently empty, with a view to bring it into Council ownership and explore potential uses. A detailed report was presented to SP&R in April of this year on the ‘City Centre Regeneration Scheme’. A further report was presented to the Special SP&R Committee in June 2024 with regards to ‘City Centre Built Heritage’. Officers will continue to work with Elected Members as work advances, including through the City Regeneration Members Working Group. Therefore it is recommended this Issue Raised in Advance is now closed.
- **Fuel Poverty Hardship Fund (280)** – This Issue Raised in Advance called on the Council to allocate £500k from Council reserves to set up an Emergency Fuel Poverty Hardship Fund and write to the Department for Communities requesting match funding for this scheme. The £500k referenced evolved into the £1.1m Fuel Poverty Hardship Fund for 2022/23. Work has continued thanks to additional funding from DFC for 2023/24. An update report will be presented to SP&R. It is recommended that this Issue Raised in Advance is now closed.

- **Memorial to Baroness May Blood (283)** – This Issue Raised in Advance called on the Council to create a permanent memorial to the late Baroness May Blood. This request was discussed at the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group and it was agreed that this will be considered as part of the City Hall statues project under the Capital Programme. Therefore it is recommended that Issue Raised in Advance is now closed.
- **Good Relations Programme (400)** – This Issue Raised in Advance called for a review of the progress of Good Relations programmes in Belfast City Council to be completed within 6 months. The Good Relations Action Plan has been reviewed and presented to the Shared City Partnership and SP&R in September 24 and delivery is underway. It was agreed at the October 24 meeting of the Shared City Partnership to review and refresh the Council's Good Relations Strategy and develop a three year action plan for Good Relations through a co-design process. This work is anticipated for completion in the second quarter of 2025. Therefore it is recommended that this Issue Raised in Advance is now closed.

3.5 Financial and Resource Implications

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

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications contained in this report"

The Committee:

- Noted the updates to all Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance that it was responsible for;
- Agreed to the closure of Notice of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance 171, 195, 225, 257, 280, 283, 300, 325, 331, 359, 386 and 400 as referenced in Appendix 1 to the report;
- Agreed that 25 – Abortion Imagery; and 341 - Childcare Provision remain opened;

- Agreed that, if an update on a motion has not been provided with 12 months of its agreement, a report providing details of progress, if any, be submitted to the appropriate Committee; and
- That an update report on motion 326 – Data Protection be submitted to the January meeting of the Committee.

Correspondence – Motion: Special Educational Needs – Legal Protection for Young People in NI

The Committee was reminded that the Council, at its meeting on 4th November, had agreed to adopt a motion on Special Educational Needs – Legal Protection for Young People in NI.

Accordingly, Democratic Services had written to the Ministers for Communities, Education and Health, and responses have been received which confirmed the Ministers' support for legislative change.

The Committee noted receipt of the correspondence as set out in the report and agreed to close the Notice of Motion.

Notice of Motion – Addressing Educational Inequalities in Belfast

The Members were informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 21st November, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 2nd December:

“In light of the DENI ‘RAISE’ programme in response to the ‘Fair Start’ report, the Council resolves to:

1. Support the RAISE programme and align it with the Belfast Agenda.
2. Establish a cross-party committee to monitor progress and ensure community engagement.
3. Commit to continuous improvement in addressing educational inequalities, including writing to the Education Minister to seek confirmation that his department will proactively respond to feedback about the targeting of the programme and ensure it reaches the communities most in need.

This motion aims to ensure coordinated, effective, and inclusive efforts to reduce educational inequalities in Belfast.”

The motion had been proposed by Councillor Bell and seconded by Councillor Long.

The Committee was advised that the Belfast Strategic Partnership (BSP) was previously a partnership between Belfast City Council, the PHA and Belfast Trust. It had been superseded by the establishment of the Community Planning Partnership.

One of the working groups of the BSP was the Lifelong Learning Group. They had established a Lifelong Learning Charter and undertook a range of community-based learning activities – including the Festival of Learning. While the BSP no longer exists, that Lifelong Learning Group continues to meet – and the main focus of their activities remains the annual festival of learning, scheduled to take place in April next year. This was usually a week-long programme of events to promote learning opportunities across the board. It did not have a specific focus on any type of learning or any target group. Membership of the group involved Belfast City Council, UU, QUB, Forum for Adult Learning, BMC and a number of community-based learning partners. The work on the Learning City group was coordinated through our Community Planning team which brings updates to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on the work. The Motion was therefore referred to this Committee.

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 – Armed Forces Covenant

The Members were informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 21st November, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 2nd December:

“That this Council recognises the unique skills that are held by Armed Forces service leavers; recognises that many veterans can face disadvantages compared to the general population, arising from military life, when accessing services and as such, this Council commits to signing up to the Armed Forces Covenant immediately.”

The motion had been proposed by Alderman Lawlor and seconded by Alderman McCullough.

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 Policy and Human Resources matters.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Whyte,

The Committee agrees to reject the motion and that no further action be undertaken.

On a vote, ten Members voted for the proposal and eight against, with one no vote and it was declared carried.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Belfast Region City Deal – update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 This report is to provide an update to Committee on the progress of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the progress on project development and delivery across the pillars of investment.**
- **Note the update in respect of programme communication and the BRCD Council Panel**

3.0 Main report

3.1 It is almost three years on from the signing of the Belfast Region City Deal, formally signed on 15 December 2021 at the ICC Belfast, the programme of investment is now delivering results, creating more and better jobs, leveraging further private sector investment and developing inclusive growth and social value.

3.2 With one project already operational, four in construction/fit-out stage, eight projects at design phase, four with planning approvals, and three skills assessments completed the programme of investment is firmly in delivery phase.

3.3 There are now also a total of 15 Outline Business Cases (OBC's) approved with a combined approximate project value of £670m and 12 Contracts for Funding signed for projects. representing significant momentum since deal signing for the programme of investment.

3.4 Key highlights on progress across the pillars of investment since the last update in August include:

- **iREACH Health has submitted and had its Full Business Case approved, ahead of on site construction work now commencing. The project has also secured key private sector partnerships with Celerion and Exploristics**

through tenancy agreement to expand clinical trials, boosting Belfast's role in cutting-edge clinical research and enhancing local healthcare innovation. It has also signed a lease agreement with the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust. The project received a green rating following its Gateway Review 3 at Investment Decision stage.

- In relation to Momentum One Zero, the planning application was formally approved in November. The centre will transform the digital innovation activity taking place in our region, focusing on key sectors such as cyber security and artificial intelligence. The project has also recently received £6.25m from UK Research and Innovation UKRI to transform supply chains to support resilient and reliable supply chains supporting food stability.
- Construction work continues apace at the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) at Global Point Park. At Studio Ulster, specialist virtual production equipment worth almost £20m and funded by City Deal, has been delivered and is being installed at its location in north Belfast. The Contract for Funding is being agreed for the Centre for Digital Healthcare Technology and detailed design continues to progress well.
- The Digital Twin Centre project led by Digital Catapult has leveraged £15m of additional Innovate UK funding and almost £10m of further private sector investment. Rental accommodation within Belfast has also been secured, with occupancy being taken up early in 2025 and a significant recruitment drive is underway.
- An Outline Business Case is being commenced for an SBRI Programme valuing c.£5m – with a focus on addressing key challenges across the Belfast Region including net zero. The pilot SBRI project, Augment the City continues to progress very well.
- The Outline Business Case has now been approved for the Ards & North Down Innovation Hub, focusing on the creative industries, and a Contract for Funding is now being developed for sign off early in 2025.

- **Mid & East Antrim Borough Council announced in September the appointment of WH Stephens, a multi-disciplinary construction consultancy to lead on the design for the i4C Cleantech Centre at St Patrick's Barracks. The centre will provide a physical base for businesses and will focus on the development of clean technology. The project is scheduled for completion in 2027. A subsidy control assessment was submitted for the project in late November, with the Contract for Funding due to be signed early in 2025.**
- **Following appointment of the integrated consultancy teams, concept designs are being developed and key surveys works being undertaken across a number of the tourism and regeneration projects including the Gobbins and Mourne Mountain Gateway Project. The RIBA Stage 2 report for Carrickfergus Regeneration has been completed and the project is now progressing to the detailed design stage and progressing towards planning.**
- **A series of public engagement events for Carrickfergus Regeneration and Mourne Mountain Gateway Project have taken place, with further events planned for the New Year. These events were designed to gather important feedback and provide insights from residents and key community and business stakeholders on the projects.**
- **Bangor Waterfront has appointed WH Stephens for Ballyholme Yacht Club and McAdam Design for Pickie Fun Park and design works are progressing. Procurement has commenced for a design team for the Urban Waterfront Public Realm project element. The Operator procurement for Pickie Fun Park and Bangor Marina are ongoing with appointments expected early in the New Year.**
- **Destination Royal Hillsborough has commenced procurement of their professional services teams with the first appointments expected in the New Year.**
- **Engagement is ongoing with the relevant statutory bodies to progress the planning applications for Destination Royal Hillsborough public realm and Newry Regeneration, to enable progression to the next stage of project delivery.**

- The procurement of the contractors for the Theatre & Conference Centre and Civic Hub projects in the Newry Regeneration programme is nearing completion and we are expecting to see works commence on site on these two projects in the spring.
- A public consultation on Belfast Stories inviting people to explore the concept designs for the project was launched on 19 November and will run for 14 weeks until 23 February 2025. The consultation is being undertaken in order to inform the next stage of project development up to the end of RIBA stage 2 and beyond.
- Procurement of the Design & Build contractor for the Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge is ongoing with the intention to appoint in summer 2025 and work to finalise the OBC for Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 is ongoing.
- The skills assessment for the Creative Industries (Virtual Production) is now complete and the assessment for the Digital sector is now in progress.

Delivering Social Value and Inclusive, Sustainable Growth

- 3.5 As reported previously ensuring that the growth generated through the BRCD is inclusive and sustainable and that it balances societal and economic needs with those of the economy is a central tenet of the BRCD.
- 3.6 Partners have adopted the Buy Social model as the minimum requirement for Social Value within contracts and contractors have now commenced uploading their Social Value Delivery Plans to the Strategic Investment Board (SIB) portal and are reporting monthly on their progress. This process is closely supported and monitored by the Programme Management Office.
- 3.7 To date contracts that have commenced reporting to the SIB portal have committed to delivery of a total of 6,609 Social Value Delivery Points, mainly through interventions such as paid employment opportunities for apprentices, student placements and graduates, health and wellbeing initiatives and climate change and carbon reducing training.

- 3.8 The BRCD Programme Management Office (PMO) have also along with representatives from the Department of Communities (DfC) held a Social Value Plans Workshop on 10th September 2024. The focus of which was to learn how DfC have been using Social Value Plans to ensure that inclusive growth is maximised during the development and delivery of capital projects. The session provided some helpful insights for BRCD partners currently preparing their Social Value Plans.

Finance and Governance

- 3.9 The overarching Deal Document is supported by a Financial Plan which sets out the overall financial framework including stewardship, protocols and controls and the role of the accountable body. The plan also details the financial forecasts and predicted funding flows and timelines and forms the basis of the financial reporting and profiling arrangements.
- 3.10 Performance reports including financial performance are considered by the Executive Board on a quarterly basis and the recent 2024-25 Quarter 2 Finance Report demonstrated the positive progress being made across the programme. The total year to date BRCD spend at the end of Quarter 2 stood at just under £20m. Drawdowns to date from both the Department for the Economy and the Department for Communities total £22m, with a further c.£9m due to be paid over the coming months.
- 3.11 An internal audit of the BRCD PMO is complete with Audit, Governance and Risk Services (AGRS) providing substantial assurance that the BRCD PMO have controls in place to facilitate the delivery of the Programme. AGRS found the controls and processes over financial management, programme management, governance, oversight and risk to be adequate, appropriate and operating effectively in line with the requirements of the Heads of Terms and Deal Document and agreed governance arrangements at a programme level.

Communications and Engagement

- 3.12 Partners held a political engagement event on Wednesday 20th November at the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings to inform and engage elected members on Deal delivery and progress to date.
- 3.13 The event provided a valuable opportunity to update and engage with MLAs on delivery to date on the Belfast Region City Deal programme of investment, to share the partners'

shared vision and to showcase the region-wide economic and social opportunities that the Deal is creating.

- 3.14 Members learned of the significant progress that has been made, thanks to the strength of the partnership and how the Belfast Region will benefit from revitalised public spaces, innovation hubs with additional office spaces and improved transportation links. They also heard how a continued focus on inclusivity, social value and employability and skills will help make the city and wider region a better place to live, work and invest in.
- 3.15 Further business engagement is planned in early 2025 and Members will be updated as this work progresses.

BRC D Council Panel

- 3.16 The next meeting of the Council Panel will be held in February 2025 and will be hosted by Mid and East Antrim Borough Council.
- 3.17 The minutes from the meeting hosted by Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council on 29 May 2024 are attached at Appendix 1 for information.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.18 All costs associated with the BRC D are within existing budgets. As outlined additional resources have also been leveraged from other funding sources to extend the impact of the deal.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.19 The approach taken to develop the City Deal has been subject to independent equality screening and rural proofing and states that;

‘BRC D is inherently inclusive, affording an opportunity for the region to grow in a way that will benefit the economy of Northern Ireland as a whole, thereby enhancing the lives and well-being of its citizens. If during further development of the programme it becomes apparent that there may be an adverse impact on certain groups or communities then the partnership commits to carrying out further Section 75 work and including screening and EQIAs as and when appropriate.’

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Consultation Low Carbon Residential Heating Consultation Response

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

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To present a draft response to the Department for Economy consultation regarding support for low carbon heating in residential buildings.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to note the proposals set out in the consultation document and to approve the draft council response as attached at appendix 1. Subject to approval by Council, the response will be submitted to DFE via their online consultation platform.

3.0 Main Report

Background

3.1 In December 2021, the Northern Ireland Executive published a ten year Energy Strategy, setting out a pathway to 2030 that would mobilise the skills, technologies and behavioural change needed to achieve net zero carbon and affordable energy by 2050. This was followed in June 2022 by the Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) which set a legislative target of at least 100% reduction in net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 2050.

3.2 Energy accounts for almost 60% of greenhouse gas emissions in Northern Ireland however, despite around half of electricity being produced from renewable sources, through importing fossil fuels, the region continues to be susceptible to price volatility in its energy bills through the links to global wholesale commodity markets. The Energy Strategy aims to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, helping Northern Ireland to become more self-sufficient, utilising locally produced renewable energy to strengthen energy security. A key objective of the Energy Strategy is to 'replace high carbon heating sources with lower and zero carbon sources in households'.

This consultation seeks views on a new domestic low carbon heat support scheme, to help inform and improve heat policy in this area. It will also serve as a method to gauge public awareness in relation to low carbon heating, together with

assessing public interest, including the local renewable heating industry, for a future support mechanism.

3.3 Draft Council Response

Overall, many of the proposals outlined are welcomed, recognising this new grant scheme as an important step toward advancing low-carbon heating in Northern Ireland. However, within the draft consultation response, we've made a number of recommendations that in summary focus on:

- Stronger alignment of funding support where possible with the pathways and measures recommended in the Belfast LAEP, specifically retrofit (via a fabric first approach), district heating and the transition of homes currently heated by oil to low carbon heating (including hybrid systems as well as ASHP) as the most affordable near-term interventions to achieve net zero by 2050.
- The need for careful coordination with any plans to support and incentivise district heating in urban areas like Belfast referencing that if the heat zoning approach currently being trialled in England were adopted in NI, a situation could arise whereby grants are provided to households to install ASHP in areas that are subsequently included in a heat zone. This could be a wasteful use of public resources.
- Increased recognition of a fabric first approach to low carbon domestic retrofit as insulated homes with high levels of energy efficiency require less energy and result in lower bills. Heat pumps in less energy efficient homes risk consuming high levels of electricity risk exacerbating fuel poverty. The response recommends that a domestic grant programme aimed at optimising energy efficiency should precede grants for low carbon heating systems.
- The importance of providing additional funding support for workforce development to ensure that adequate numbers of certified installers are available to support safe and reliable installations of low carbon heating systems.
- The need to build consumer awareness and confidence with support for awareness campaigns and a one-stop-shop to inform homeowners about the benefits of low-carbon heating, as well as the operational differences compared to conventional systems.

A copy of the DFE consultation and supporting materials can be accessed at [here](#).

3.4 Financial and Resource Implications

None

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

None.”

The Committee:

- 1) noted the proposals set out in the consultation document;
- 2) approved the draft Council response as attached at appendix 1 to the report; and
- 3) noted that, subject to approval by the Council, the response would be submitted to DFE via its online consultation platform.

Changing Places Toilet Policy

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

An update report was brought to the Disability Working Group on 10th October 2023, which endorsed the draft Policy and recommended that it be brought back to the Committee for approval. The Committee had, on 24th November 2023, approved the draft Changing Places Toilet Policy for public consultation. The public consultation began on 29th January 2024 and ended on 22nd April 2024.

The final draft Changing Places Toilet Policy was reviewed by the internal CPT Officer Working Group on 29th August 2024, by CMT on 25th September 2024 and by the Disability WG on 11th December 2024.

90 people responded to the Public Consultation and the findings were:

- 75.4% of the respondents agreed with the draft Changing Places Toilet Policy, with a smaller percentage (17.9%) disagreeing.
- 66% of the respondents used the Parks at least once week.
- 39.7% of the respondents have a disability.
- 57.5% of the respondents were carers/dependents.

Two written responses were received which indicated that the wording of the draft policy was not acceptable, for example, the Council should be committed, and not to strive to do and that a commitment to a rolling programme of addressing the CPT deficit and toilet needs identified.

Two main recommended amendments have been made to the final draft Policy. The final draft Policy now states that 'the Council will commit to', instead of 'the Council will strive to' provide as required a Changing Places facility in every large building. Also, the Council will make it a commitment for large events being organised by external organisers/promoters to provide CPT facilities. The Council will also make an effort to include Changing Places facilities or to make toilet provision more accessible when extending or extensively refurbishing an existing Council-owned building when it is reasonable to do so.

The Members were advised that the Council had received several requests recently in relation to improving physical access within Council owned toilets, including requests from a number of campaigns in relation to Stoma Friendly toilets and also correspondence from the Crohn's and Colitis UK campaign "Not Every Disability Is Visible". These campaigns has each requested the introduction of disposable facilities with accompanying signage/posters promoting the various causes.

It was proposed that, in response to such requests, officers advise that one of the first steps in the implementation of the CPT policy would be an audit of all accessible toilet provision across the Council estate. The purpose of this review would be to help identify any gaps and to quantify the level of resources which would be required to upgrade toilets and increase accessibility in order to make the toilets stoma, Crohns and colitis friendly.

Whilst the commitments in the policy could be met within existing budgets it was likely that there would be financial implications in the roll out of Changing Places Facilities following the audit of accessible toilet provision in the Council's estate.

The Committee approved the draft Changing Places Toilet Policy as set out in Appendix 1 to the report.

Corporate Plan 2025-28

The Committee considered the following report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To present Committee with the 2025-2028 Corporate Plan (Appendix 1) and seek approval for it to be published for public consultation early in the new year.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- i. consider and agree the draft Corporate Plan (2023-28) as attached at Appendix 1;**

- ii. agree that the draft Corporate Plan, subject to minor edits based on Members feedback, be published in January 2025 for public consultation;
- iii. note that a draft annual Corporate Delivery Plan (2025-26) will be submitted for the consideration of Members in January / February 2025.

3.0 Key Issues

- 3.1** Members will be aware of the challenging environment within which the Council currently operates. The escalating fiscal strain, fueled by rising prices, a cost-of-living crisis and economic challenges are having significant adverse impacts on individuals, families and services across the city and widening inequalities.
- 3.2** It is never as important for the Council to ensure it pivots to meet the challenges and opportunities which emerge over the coming months and years. The process through which the new three-year corporate plan is co-designed with elected members is essential and how this connects with and helps inform the Council's resource planning cycles (budgets, people, capital and assets) and the development of a Medium-Term Financial Plan.
- 3.3** Members will be aware of the discussions which has taken place since the election of the new Council through Standing Committees, Party Groups Leader meetings and all Member workshops in relation to key areas of the corporate plan and proposed priorities for future investment focus to help shape the emerging new Corporate Plan.

Corporate Plan 2025-2028

- 3.4** Members will be aware of the importance of the corporate plan as a key governance document, cited in the council's constitution as the means by which the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee sets the strategic direction of the council. It sets out what the council wants to achieve for the city and the key priority actions to make this happen. These priorities are then used as the basis for informing any emerging medium-term financial plan.
- 3.5** A copy of the proposed draft Corporate Plan (2025-2028) is attached at Appendix 1 for Members consideration and feedback. Members will note that the themes are largely aligned with the themes emerging from the recently published Belfast Agenda as well as the additional focus on 'our services' and 'our organisation'.

- 3.6 Subject to Committee consideration and Full Council approval, it is proposed that the draft corporate plan be published in January 2025 for public consultation.

Corporate Delivery Plan 2025-2026

- 3.7 Members will appreciate the scale of work which continues to be delivered by Council and the impact of this within communities across the city. The intention is to bring forward the detailed delivery plan for the 2025-26 period for the consideration of the Committee, in early 2025, which will be aligned with the budget setting process.

3.8 **Financial and Resource Implications**

There are no immediate resource implications. However, the priorities agreed in the corporate plan will form the basis of the rate setting process.

3.9 **Equality of Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment**

Equality screening has been completed as part of the plan development process.”

The Committee:

- i. agreed the draft Corporate Plan (2023-28) as attached at Appendix 1 to the report;
- ii. agreed that the draft Corporate Plan be published in January 2025 for public consultation; and
- iii. noted that a draft annual Corporate Delivery Plan (2025-26) would be submitted for the consideration of the Committee in January / February 2025.

DAERA Consultation on the establishment of a Just Transition Commission for Northern Ireland

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present a draft response to the DAERA consultation regarding the establishment of a Just Transition Commission for Northern Ireland.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- Note the proposals set out in the consultation document and to approve the draft council response as attached at appendix 1. Subject to approval by Council, the response will be submitted to DAERA via their online consultation platform.

3.0 Key Issues

Background

- 3.1 The Climate Change Act (Northern Ireland) 2022 (the Act) sets out a framework for tackling climate change and reducing emissions in Northern Ireland. It places requirements on government departments relating to delivering just transition objectives and includes a requirement for the establishment of a Just Transition Commission (Commission). The Act states the functions of the Commission will include overseeing the implementation of the just transition elements of the Act and providing advice to departments on how to ensure their emissions reduction policies and Climate Action Plans (CAP) comply with the just transition principle. DAERA is responsible for establishing the Commission.
- 3.2 The just transition principle aims to promote fairness during the transition to a low-emissions economy and to ensure support is provided to those who are most affected by climate change. Often this will be the individuals or groups who have done the least to cause it, and yet who may be the least equipped to adapt to its effects. High-level objectives include taking action to reduce emissions in a manner which helps to support environmentally sustainable jobs, low-carbon investment, and infrastructure.
- 3.3 Ensuring that Northern Ireland reaches its net zero goal in a way that is fair, sustainable and balanced is a priority for the NI Executive and the establishment of the Commission is an essential element in supporting the delivery of that ambition. The consultation is not about the merits or otherwise of the Commission, but rather the proposed Regulations (the legislation) that will set out the type of public body the Commission should be. DAERA is therefore seeking feedback on issues such as composition, membership, role and legislated functions, reporting arrangements, secretariat and support required. DAERA is also seeking initial suggestions for what the Commission should focus on.

Draft Council Response

- 3.4 Overall, the establishment of the Commission is to be welcomed. DAERA is proposing to base the structure of the Commission around the Scottish model, which provides a good practice framework. However, within the draft consultation response, we've made various recommendations that in summary focus on:
- Increased recognition of the role of local government and its participation in the framework.
 - Suggested enhancements to the membership, including amendments to the Climate Change (Just Transition Commission) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 so that local government is a named sector within the Schedule.
 - The importance of meaningful collaboration and civic engagement an ensuring participation by key stakeholders including civic society, business and economy and the education and skills sectors.
- 3.5 As part of our response, we recommended that the Commission should focus on the following priority areas. More details are provided in the draft response attached at appendix 1 and area summarised as follows:
- Participation and collaboration.
 - Addressing social risks.
 - Supporting a green jobs revolution
 - Laying the social groundwork for a resilient and inclusive net-zero economy.
 - Driving local solutions.
 - Reinforcing the urgency for concerted efforts to combat climate change.
 - Focus on high-impact sectors
 - Supporting processes.
- 3.6 A copy of the DAERA consultation and supporting materials including the draft Regulations can be accessed at [here](#).

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.7 There are no financial or resource implications arising directly from this report. Whilst the Commission may have oversight of any Just Transition Funds that may be established in future, this consultation does not seek views on proposals to establish such funds.

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

3.8 There are no equality, good relations or rural needs implications arising directly from this report.”

The Committee:

- i. noted the proposals set out in the consultation document;
- ii. approved the draft Council response as attached at appendix 1 to the report; and
- iii. noted that, subject to approval by the Council, the response would be submitted to DAERA via its online consultation platform.

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 Director of Property and Projects submitted for the Committee’s consideration 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 includes a review of recently completed and underway physical projects including Sporting Pitches Investment, along with requests for approvals relating to the Capital Programme and an update on external capital funding via the PeacePLUS Programme.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Physical Programme Half Year Update - Note the overall update on projects that have been completed recently and projects currently under construction at 3.1 to 3.5 below and in Appendix 1; and that the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange a site visit to any projects that have been completed or are underway.**
- **Sporting Pitches Investment Update - Note the update on the Sporting Pitches Investment via City & Neighbourhoods Services Department including work to investigate securing community access to sporting facilities owned by other key partners; progress in anticipation of future potential funding opportunities; and progress on work to increase pitch provision across the city.**
- **Capital Programme Stage Movements:**
 - **IT Programme – In-Cab Technology and Routing System – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £653,000 be allocated.**
 - **Innovation Factory Access Control System - Agree that ‘Innovation Factory Access Control’ is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed*; note that a satisfactory tender return has been received, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £100,000 be allocated.**
 - **Floral Hall Health & Safety Works - Agree that ‘Floral Hall Health & Safety Works’ is moved immediately to *Stage 3 – Committed* due to the condition of the building; note that a satisfactory tender return has been received, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this phase of the project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £750,000 be allocated for the immediate works**
 - **Belfast Zoo Health and Safety Works - Agree that ‘Belfast Zoo Health & Safety Works’ is 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 contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically**

advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver;

- 35-39 Royal Ave Health & Safety Works - Agree that '35-39 Royal Ave Health & Safety Works' is 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 contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver;
- 35-39 Royal Avenue - Agree that '35-39 Royal Avenue' is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed on the long term model.
- Fleet Programme – Small Vehicles - Agree that 'Fleet Programme – Small Vehicles' project is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging* to allow a business case to be developed.
- External Capital Funding Update – PeacePLUS 1.4 – note the key conditions within the Letter of Offer from SEUPB for the Reconnected Belfast project under Theme 1.4 of the PeacePLUS Programme.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Physical Programme Half Year Update

Members are aware of the scale of the Council's Physical Programme via a range of internal and external funding streams. 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. Below is a brief summary of projects completed since June, as well as a sample of projects currently underway. Members are advised that from 2025 this half yearly reporting will be provided in line with the financial year to align with other reporting patterns, rather than by calendar year.

3.2 Awards and recognition

Three of the Council's recently completed capital projects have been successful finalists for the prestigious National Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) Awards held in October – St. Comgall's winning in the Refurbishment category and Templemore Baths – finalist for the Heritage category. In addition, Shankill Shared Women's Centre is also

winner of the Construction Employers Federation (CEF) Awards 2024 for Social/Community Construction Project of the Year (above £2m). The awards recognise and celebrate the most inspirational initiatives and developments across the UK.

3.3 Recently completed projects:

- **Shankill Shared Women’s Centre (PEACE IV) – a £7.7m purpose-built shared space for women and their families. This significant new building is now complete and operational.**
- **Black Mountain Shared Space Project (PEACE IV) – a £7m shared community space on the former Finlay’s factory site in west Belfast. The new building provides cross community facilities, joint programming and outreach. The building is complete and operational. Phase 2 works are ongoing.**
- **Dual Language Street Signs – Gaeltacht Quarter - completion of the erection of dual language street signs en bloc within the Gaeltacht Quarter.**
- **Belfast Bikes Expansion – new bike station is now installed at Yorkgate.**
- **Playground Improvement Programme – improvements have been completed at New Lodge playground by CNS.**
- **Other enhancements to Council assets include - Waterfront Hall/ICC Toilet Refurbishment, Brook Changing Pavilion, Henry Jones Playing Fields CCTV and lighting, Flora Street Play Park, Waste Transfer Station Floor Repairs, Water Refill Stations at City Hall and St George’s Market, The Mount MUGA (North Queen Street), Cherryvale Playing Fields Pitch 1, Pedestrian Access at Alexandra Park HWRC, Napier Park boundary works, fleet workshop replacement lifts and EV lifts for workshops at Duncrue.**
- **Cavehill Tennis Club (BIF) - completion of the refurbishment of three tennis courts and replacement of perimeter fencing.**
- **Berlin Swifts Football Club (LIF and SOF) – provision of 2-team changing facilities and improvements now completed.**
- **Woodvale Park (SOF) - completion of Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) pitch upgrades.**
- **Women’s TEC (LIF) - completion of upgrade to windows at education centre.**
- **Shankill Road Environmental Improvement Project (SOF) - completion of environmental improvements and lighting for the Shankill Road.**

- The Entries Project – completion of Sugarhouse Entry part of the transformation of city centre entries into vibrant places that are safe, welcoming, playful and imaginative.

3.4 **Physical projects underway:**

- Ballysillan Playing Fields (Urban Villages) - this is a £8.4m partnership project with DfI's Living with Water Programme, DfC and Urban Villages. The contractor has recently been appointed with mobilisation this month and works to commence on site in the New Year.
- Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF) - a total of 20 significant scale projects have now progressed to *Stage 3 – Delivery* stage under the £10m+ NRF Programme. Design Team procurements are underway for a number of schemes. The contractor is appointed for the first scheme at Act Initiative Community Hub & Visitor Centre with work due to start on site in January 2025.
- Lagan Gateway Greenway Phase 2 (BIF) – work continues on the next stages of this major investment of £5m in a new navigation lock, iconic foot and cycle bridge and new path connections. The procurement exercise is underway.
- Strand Arts Centre (BIF) – works to commence on the £6.4m major refurbishment of the NI last remaining art deco cinema building. The centre will provide a mix of educational and skills development workshops, arts, and heritage tours.
- The Lockhouse (Urban Villages) - this £2.7m partnership project will reimagine a historic and culturally important residential building along the Lagan towpath into a community focal point for good relations activity and cross-community partnership working, including minority ethnic communities. Remaining elements funded by DfC, DfI and Executive Office.
- ABC Trust Health and Leisure Hub (Urban Villages) – Phase 2 of the project is continuing on site comprising a community café, boxing club, minor halls, community gym and office space.
- Sandy Row Arts & Digital Hub (BIF and Urban Villages) – work is progressing on the new build development for creative and digital arts entrepreneurs.
- Hosford Community Houses (Urban Villages) – refurbishment of a building in ownership of East Belfast Mission at 240 Newtownards Road. Planned completion in early 2025.

- Titanic People Exhibition (Urban Villages) – redevelopment of the courtyard/frontage of the existing building at Westbourne Presbyterian Church. Planned completion anticipated in Spring 2025.
- Corporate projects – a range of capital IT projects via Digital Services to ensure business continuity including the completion of the Replacement Hardware for NIHE System, Server & Storage Technology Refresh, Grants Management System; Waste Plan – Expansion of Glass Collection Scheme, HWRC and CAS Containers, and ongoing delivery of Fleet Replacement Programme via City & Neighbourhoods Services.
- Developers Contributions – progressing a number of open space projects via CNS funded under S76 Developer Contributions.
- Playground Improvement Programme – Grampian Avenue, Michelle Baird and Balfour Avenue playgrounds are all on track to be completed by Spring 2025.
- Sporting Pitches Investment – improvements to pitches at Falls Park, Mallusk Playing Fields, Henry Jones Playing Fields, and Strangford Avenue Playing Fields (see detailed update at 3.6).

3.5 Physical projects in development:

The remainder of the Physical Programme covers projects at earlier stages i.e. tender preparation or before. This includes schemes at the start of procurement at *Stage 3 – Committed* as well as those at *Stage 2 – Uncommitted* and *Stage 1 – Emerging* or equivalent:

- Capital Programme: Cathedral Gardens, New Crematorium, Belfast Stories, Reservoir Safety Programme, Alleygates Phase 5, LTP Girdwood Indoor Sports Facility, Waste Plan projects, Waterfront Hall – Chiller Units, Relocation of Dunbar Link Cleansing Depot, New Cemetery, Access to the Hills – connections from Cavehill to Black Mountain, Sydenham Greenway, Glencairn Park/Ligoniel Park Greenway, Black Mountain/Upper Whiterock Greenway, Colin Greenway, City Hall – Installation of 2 Stained Glass Windows, and recently added schemes including Floral Hall Health & Safety Works, Wilmont House, Fernhill House and Courtyard, Historic Cemeteries and Historic Tiled Street Signs.
- A range of other schemes are also in development including the remaining LIF, BIF and SOF projects.

Sporting Pitches Investment

- 3.6 Members will recall that improvement works are underway to a number of pitches across the city. Work is also being progressed to investigate securing community access to sporting facilities owned by other key partners; to prepare for future potential funding opportunities; and on work to increase pitch provision across the city.

Members were advised in June 2024 of work on an area-by-area basis to identify, agree and secure quick wins at the Council's pitch sites whilst the Pitches Strategy is still in development. Work is progressing on sites across the city as summarised below. Works may be subject to slight change due to weather dependency. Officers continue to identify pitch sites, city wide, for improvement as opportunities arise and will provide updates as work progresses.

Sporting Pitches Investment 2024/25 update:

- **Mallusk Playing Fields** - Conversion of the redundant shale soccer pitch to full size, grass Gaelic football is underway, drainage works are ongoing with turfing works programmed to be complete by early 2025. Fabrication is currently underway for four GAA ball-stop systems with installation also due in early 2025. Due to the requirement for four full size, grass Gaelic football pitches at this location two existing, synthetic cricket wickets are programmed to be relocated within the site in February 2025.
- **Henry Jones Playing Fields** - Full planning approval for works at the Gaelic sports pitch was obtained in early November 2024. Fabrication of the GAA ball-stop systems and 1.2m high spectator railing is currently underway. Works will start this month with completion expected by the end of January 2025.
- **Falls Park** - Full planning approval for works at the Gaelic sports pitch was obtained in July 2024. Both GAA ball-stop systems have been installed. Fabrication of the 1.2m high spectator railing is currently underway; installation of the spectator fence and associated hard standing is programmed to be complete by the end of February 2025.
- **Strangford Avenue Playing Fields** - One of the soccer pitches was reconfigured for two small-sided pitches, including goals. The third pitch at the site, currently resting, will be set up in May for summer soccer for which there is demand at this site.

- Loughside Playing Fields – a new 9-a-side pitch has been created at this site adjacent to the new Crusaders FC 4G pitch.

In addition, improvement works have also been undertaken at the following sites:

- Napier Park - Installation of a new 4m high ball-stop fence to the boundary is complete.
- Belvoir Activity Centre MUGA - Improvement works are underway and include replacement of the existing MUGA carpet, drainage improvements and replacement existing basketball hoops and soccer netting. Works are expected to be complete within the coming weeks.
- Lenadoon Park (Section 76 Developer Contribution) - Improvement works at the soccer pitch are complete and included new spectator hard standings, an extension to the height of the existing pitch boundary fence and drainage improvements at dug out areas.
- Suffolk Playing Fields - The existing drainage system that served all three existing grass soccer pitches at Suffolk Playing Fields was improved in late November 2024, works included the construction of a new manhole and culverted outlet pipe.

Partnership opportunities for community access to facilities

In addition to these infrastructure improvements at council facilities, officers have been working to identify partnership opportunities to secure community access to facilities owned by the Education Authority or by other sporting clubs. Since the last committee update officers have secured access to a number of pitches located at the Montgomery Road Campus of the Belfast Met and negotiations regarding the terms of community usage for these are underway. The pitches previously used for rugby have potential for conversion to a number of smaller soccer pitches. Design options are underway. Officers are currently engaging with the IFA to identify potential sites for improvements to facilitate further development of grass roots soccer. This work is being carried out in anticipation of a possible further release of funding from DCMS. Members will be kept advised of any announcement in relation to this potential funding stream.

Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

- 3.7 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
IT Programme – In-Cab Technology and Routing System	Replacement of two current systems: Masternaut fleet tracking and Webaspx route optimisation software with one integrated system.	<i>Stage 3 – Committed:</i> Proceed to contractor appointment with a maximum budget of £653,000
Innovation Factory Access Control System	Procurement of a replacement for the access control system at the Innovation Factory.	Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed:</i> Proceed to contractor appointment with a maximum budget of £100,000
Floral Hall – Health and Safety Works	Works required to stabilise and secure the building	Move to <i>Stage 3 – Committed:</i> Proceed to contractor appointment for the immediate health & safety works with a maximum budget of £750,000
Belfast Zoo – Health and Safety Works	Health, safety and welfare works at the Zoo including improvements to animal enclosures and boundary fencing works.	Add at <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i> and initiate procurement exercise
35-39 Royal Ave – Health & Safety Works	Urgent works to recently acquired Grade B2 listed building.	Add at <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i> and initiate procurement exercise
35-39 Royal Avenue	Emerging proposal for recently acquired Grade B2 listed building.	Add at <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i>
Fleet Programme - Small Vehicles	Procurement of two smaller collection vehicles to improve collection performance in narrow and restricted streets.	Add at <i>Stage 1 – Emerging</i>

3.8 IT Programme – In-Cab Technology and Routing System

Members will recall that in September 2023 this project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at *Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk* pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. An update was to be brought back to Committee along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council. This project involves the replacement of two current systems Masternaut fleet tracking and Webaspx route optimisation software with one integrated system - a digital system that integrates frontline operations, operational control and the customer hub. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £653,000 be allocated.

3.9 Innovation Factory Access Control System

Members will recall that last month this project was moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted*. The project is for the replacement of the access control system at Innovation Factory. The current system is no longer fit for purpose. There is a requirement to upgrade the system which includes new door controllers, readers, and associated software. Members are asked to agree that 'Innovation Factory Access Control' is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed*; note that a satisfactory tender return has been received, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £100,000 be allocated.

3.10 Floral Hall Health and Safety Works

Members will recall that last month this project was added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging*. A series of immediate health and safety works are required to the building. This will allow the building to be stabilised and steps to be undertaken to secure the most historically significant elements of the Hall including the domed roof. Members are asked to agree that 'Floral Hall Health & Safety Works' is moved immediately to *Stage 3 – Committed* due to the deteriorating condition of the building; note that a satisfactory tender return has been received, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this phase of the project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £750,000 be allocated with a further tender figure to be brought back for any remaining works.

3.11 Belfast Zoo – Health and Safety Works

A range of health, safety and welfare works are required at the Zoo including improvements to animal enclosures and boundary fencing works. Members are asked to agree that 'Belfast Zoo – Health and Safety Works' is 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 contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

3.12 35-39 Royal Avenue

The property recently acquired by the Council at 35-39 Royal Avenue is listed as Grade B2 and the building requires physical intervention, as well as further consideration on the future model. Health and safety works to the roof are required to be brought forward at pace to secure the building's integrity. It is proposed to bring this forward as two distinct pieces of work under the Capital Programme.

Members are asked to agree that '35-39 Royal Avenue Health & Safety Works' is 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 contract to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

Further, Members are asked to agree that '35-39 Royal Avenue' is also added to the Capital Programme as a *Stage 1 – Emerging* project to allow a business case and preferred model to be developed along with any associated improvement works.

3.13 Fleet Programme - Small Vehicles

Procurement of two smaller collection vehicles to improve collection performance in narrow and restricted streets. Members are asked to agree that 'Fleet Programme – Small Vehicles' is added to the Capital Programme as a *Stage 1 – Emerging* project to allow a business case to be developed.
PeacePLUS Programme - Reconnected Belfast

3.14 Members will be aware that the Council's Reconnected Belfast bid to the EU PeacePLUS Programme has been successful,

securing an offer of €13.5m funding to enhance shared space and connectivity within and between Waterworks and Alexandra Park area of North Belfast as well as enhance linkages with other parts of the city and to the Belfast Hills. The Reconnect Belfast bid was submitted under Investment Area 1.4: Re-imagining Communities which seeks to 'create a more cohesive society through an increased provision of shared spaces and services, which will benefit and embed peace and reconciliation.' Members will also recall that the aligned Reservoir Safety Improvements project is currently at *Stage 3 – Committed* on the Capital Programme.

The Reconnected Belfast project is a strategic connectivity project which aims to make Belfast a fully sustainably connected city via a series of greenways, urban greenways, and pocket parks. A key element of this transformational project will be to reduce long standing severance issues between communities, created by the physical environment including road infrastructure and interface barriers, by developing the surrounding and internal infrastructure.

The Letter of Offer has been received from SEUPB and is under review across a number of departments prior to acceptance. Members are asked to note several key conditions within the Letter of Offer including:

- The period of assistance started on 1 November 2024 and runs until 31 July 2029. Any costs not processed by this end date will be ineligible for reimbursement.
- The Council must bear any budget overruns as the Lead Partner.
- The funding can only be used for the approved purposes to achieve the agreed outputs and indicators. Any changes must be agreed with SEUPB.
- The Council must enter into a Data Sharing Agreement – the content of which is under review with the Data Protection Team within Council.

Members are also asked to note that the Letter of Offer is in Euro. (€). Council officers have been liaising with SEUPB to ascertain if the offer can be in Pounds Sterling (£) but have been informed that this is not possible. This carries a risk of the Council being subject to currency fluctuations however the Council will continue to work with SEUPB in this regard and if any issues arise these will be reported back to Committee. Members are asked to note that this will also apply to the Letter of Offer for the Local Action Plan under Theme 1.1 and to agree that the Council accept the Letter of Offer subject to these going through the full Letter of Offer approval process.

During the development stage, significant community engagement was carried out on this scheme including an engagement and visioning exercise in 2023 as well as the pre-Planning community consultation in early 2024. Further Design Information Sessions on the project are due to take place in the coming months and officers will keep Members updated on next steps.

3.15 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial Implications –

IT Programme – In-Cab Technology and Routing System - a maximum of £653,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Innovation Factory Access Control System – a maximum of £100,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Floral Hall Health & Safety Works – a maximum of £750,000 is now allocated to the first phase of this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver.

3.16 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 and in regard to the External Capital Funding Update – PeacePLUS 1.4 – noted the key conditions within the Letter of Offer from SEUPB for the Reconnected Belfast project under Theme 1.4 of the PeacePLUS Programme and agreed that the council accept the LOO. It was also noted that the LOO had been received in €’ and that this would also apply to the LOO for Theme 1.1 the Local Action Plan’.

Area Working Groups Update

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of North Area Working Group of 26 November and agreed:

- to the reallocation of £15,000 LIF funding, that officers would engage with Ardoyne Youth Club and Benview Community Centre to scope out project proposals and provide an update to a future meeting of the Working Group; and

- that the additional £68,179 NRF funding would be retained in contingency for the agreed projects progressing under the funding stream.

Installation of LGBT Stained Glass Window in City Hall

The Committee agreed that, subject to minor amendments and refinements, to approve the design and concept of the new LGBT stained-glass window as agreed by the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group at its meeting on 12th December. It was further agreed that the design was restricted until the unveiling.

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);
- approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2);
- noted the award of retrospective STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3); and
- approve the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 4):

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Complex Lives Case Management System	Up to 4 years	£34,634	S McNicholl	To enable BCC Complex Lives staff and external statutory, community and voluntary organizations to collaborate, share information, create and monitor plans to support vulnerable citizens affected by chronic homelessness
Provision of mobile phone service and mobile devices	Up to 3 years	£570,000	S McNicholl	Mobile phones are needed for Council staff working away from Council offices.

Consultancy support with online Office 365 testing exercises to assist with the recruitment and selection of Business Support Clerks	Up to 1 year	£40,000	C Sheridan	The procurement of externally validated online Office 365 tests is required for the recruitment of Business Support Clerks to assist with the Council's employability programme i.e. use of externally validated online tests in place of requiring prescriptive GCSE qualifications for applicants.
Procurement of external Security Operations Centre (SOC) Services to augment the security team in Digital Services	Up to 3 years	£500,000	S McNicholl	To manage the council's escalating cyber security risk, Digital Services must procure the services of an external security operations centre (SOC) to acquire the skills and toolsets to augment a smaller and less experienced security team in BCC
Laptops, docking stations and other peripherals e.g. monitors	Up to 3 years	£1,500,000	S McNicholl	New devices to facilitate hybrid working and replacement devices as per regular business as usual replacement cycle.

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
Provision of catering services at Belfast Zoo	Up to 2 years	Income based contract	D Martin	Following a recent open tender exercise no bids were received. The Zoo's current catering contract	Carousel Ice Cream	1

				<p>finishes on 3 January 2024, so an alternative operator must be quickly sourced to ensure a catering provision is available to service the zoo's year-round operation.</p> <p>We have been able to secure an agreement with Carousel Ice Cream to provide all year round coverage with seasonal variations to suit demand (i.e. mobile catering in winter months/ low footfall) and normal café/restaurant operations in summer months/high footfall.</p> <p>Carousel currently operates a mobile food unit in the Zoo so they are familiar with the zoo's operation, visitor experience and seasonality of the catering provision. Their familiarity will allow for quick mobilisation and will aid with a smooth transition between catering providers.</p> <p>The 2-year STA (1+1 year option) will allow BCC to trial the new</p>		
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				operation to ensure it is profitable/viable with a view of re-approaching the market with an open tender.		
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Table 3: Retrospective Single Tender Actions

Title of Contract	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
HPE Foundation Care 2x7 SVC Hardware plus Software Support for Aruba Servers and Controllers	Up to 1 year	£68,448	P Gribben	Hardware and software warranty and support on Aruba Servers and Controllers for wired and wireless networks. No other suitable supplier is available. Retrospective approval required due to delays in agreeing terms with supplier.	Specialist Computer Centres (SCC)	3

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Review and update final business case 'FBC' for the proposed new Crematorium at Roselawn project	Up to 3 weeks	£47,500	S Grimes	Given the suppliers prior involvement in the commercial analysis of the project they have unique knowledge and insight to help finalise the 'FBC' without unnecessary delays to enable Committee consideration of the project	Morrow Gilchrist	3
Pest Control Services	Up to 6 months	£59,990	D Sales/N Largey	<p>There is an ongoing need for an external contractor to provide pest control services required at Council owned sites. These are additional services to what the Council's internal Pest Contract Unit is currently resourced to provide.</p> <p>Approval to proceed to tender for these services via a corporate contract was presented to SP&R in June 2024 but was not approved.</p>	Termapest	11

				<p>This was approved for 6 months on the basis that Depts seek quotations to cover service continuity and/or approval is granted to proceed with a tender for these services.</p>		
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Table 4: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration & Value	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
CPC Driver Training	2 years & £30k	Additional £4k	D Sales	<p>To ensure new & current BCC drivers have CPS training/qualification. Requirement originally procured via quotation as estimated to be <£30k; however, due to increased demand the £30k value has now been exceeded. Reported to SP&R for information.</p> <p>Work underway to procure replacement longer term contract.</p>	Logistics UK

In noting the award to the retrospective STA for the Pest Control Services, which had been put in place to ensure service continuity, the Committee expressed its dissatisfaction that the award of the STA had been made without seeking, in the first instance, the Committee's approval and in the absence of submitting a report on other potential delivery options as previously requested. It was agreed that a report be submitted to the January meeting outlining the status of the STA and whether it could be withdrawn.

It was agreed also that, prior to the award of future STAs, where time does not permit these to be submitted to the Committee, that they be considered firstly by the Chief Executive in consultation with the Chairperson.

Procurement Act 2023

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 update members on the requirements of new Procurement Act 2023 (for Supplies, Services and Works contracts) relating to:

- **Category Management**
- **Procurement process updates including Pre-Market Engagement (PME) and Conflicts of Interest (Col)**
- **Contract Management**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Note the Legislative updates contained within the report.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 The new [Procurement Act 2023](#) is planned to go live 24 February 2025. Commercial and Procurement Services' (CPS) preparation of all upcoming changes required to above UK threshold procurements has commenced and is on schedule for go-live.

3.2 Any Contract Notice published, or contract awarded prior to go live will be managed under the current Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

3.3 Many of the changes that will come into effect impact the buyer side and will be managed centrally by CPS. These include additional notice requirements, changes to the standstill period and evaluation reporting / award letters.

These changes will be managed through our existing governance which includes processes, procedures, template forms, and training. Council Officers involved in procurement activity will be kept up to date of changes made. Information on changes that impact bidders / suppliers is available and maintained on the Council's [website](#).

- 3.4 The main change that bidders / suppliers will face is use of the Government's extended Find a Tender Service, named Central Digital Platform. The platform is currently being tested by Cabinet Office, with further guidance to be issued. New registration will be required for any bidder who wants to participate in an above threshold procurement exercise.

Background

- 3.5 The procurement process is one part of the Commercial Life Cycle. The National Audit Office defines the 'commercial lifecycle' as the entire process starting with the identification of a requirement that may be delivered by a supplier to government through to the selection and appointment process, contract management activity, and ending with contract termination or transition to alternative arrangements.
- 3.6 The new Legislation will introduce a number of requirements that will more widely impact staff involved in the end-to-end commercial lifecycle and the time taken to procure Supplies and Services.

Category Management

- 3.7 The new legislation requires Contracting Authorities to aggregate requirements that can reasonably be aggregated unless there are good reasons for not doing so. This is part of Category Management.
- 3.8 Category Management is a structured approach to grouping and improving the procurement of similar goods and services across the Council. CPS will continue to work with departments to support the implementation of a Category Management approach.
- 3.9 The introduction of new processes in the Council's finance system (implemented May 2024) is already helping us identify expenditure across the Council that can be aggregated. This will result in more cross-departmental contracts being identified, which will require a shift to more co-operative ownership and management of contracts across the Council.

- 3.10 CMT have agreed to ensure resources are in place to effectively implement Category Management. CPS will support Chief Officers resourcing consideration, which could include, for example, the appointment of a Contract Manager for a specific category of spend.

Pre-Market Engagement

- 3.11 Currently, formal pre-market engagement (PME) activity is facilitated by CPS to seek views from the market as required - for example, to support specification or pricing schedule development.
- 3.12 The new Procurement Act places a greater emphasis on the transparency of PME undertaken by considering the purpose and subject of the engagement and not the type of communication or engagement. Informal PME could include any communication with a supplier if the purpose is related to an upcoming procurement exercise. We will be required to publish all PME, informal as well as formal.
- 3.13 CPS will share updated guidance on PME with BCC officers and members as required.

Conflicts of Interest

- 3.14 Another aspect of the Legislation with greater transparency requirements is the declaration of any conflicts. We currently have a Conflict of Interest process that is aimed at officers involved in specification development and evaluation.
- 3.15 New requirements now:
- broaden the assessment of potential conflicts to include 'any interested parties that can influence a decision made by or on behalf of a Contracting Authority'.
 - broaden the consideration and management of conflicts across the entire contract lifecycle which includes taking up contract extensions and management of the contract.
 - require published confirmation a conflicts assessment has been conducted at various stages of the procurement and contract lifecycle.
- 316 To facilitate this CPS will update the Conflicts process and update members of any changes to their conflict process relating to the monthly Contracts Report.

Contract Management

- 3.17 Contract Management activity within BCC is devolved to each Department and is defined as the management of activity post contract award. It is an important phase of the procurement cycle in which a supplier delivers the required goods, services, or works as described in the specification and terms and conditions of contract.
- 3.18 BCC Officers follow existing guidance on [contract management](#) in the delivery of their contracts. This activity will remain relatively unchanged. Contract Owners will continue to oversee contract management across their department or service and Contract Managers will continue to work with their suppliers to deliver contract outcomes including Social Value. The main change is related to the reporting on contract management activity.
- 3.19 The new legislation aims to embed further transparency requirements throughout the contract lifecycle so that the spending of ratepayers' money can be properly scrutinised. This includes specific reporting requirements during the contract management phase.
- For contracts with a value exceeding £5million contracting authorities will be required to:
 - set and publish a minimum of three KPIs for such contracts
 - actively report on the management and achievement of any KPIs set and
 - publish details of poor performance that has not been rectified by a supplier
- 3.21 The Government's new Central Digital Platform will be used for the publication of these requirements.
- 3.22 To facilitate this legislative requirement, CPS will introduce Contract Tiering. Contract Tiering involves classifying contracts based on value and importance, in line with Government guidelines.
- 3.23 CPS will update the existing [contract management guidelines](#) on a phased approach to:
- set out the additional mandatory Legislative requirements of Tier 1 contracts
 - recommend the appropriate level of contract management activity required for each Tier.

3.24 In conjunction with these changes CPS have commenced the process of customising a new Contract Management module which is linked to the new finance system. It is planned for implementation during 2025 which will support effective contract management including spend management etc.

3.25 CMT have agreed to ensure resources are appropriately skilled to deliver the mandatory and recommended contract management activity.

3.26 **Financial and Resource Implications**

Potential financial and resource implications as detailed within report.

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

Not relevant for this report.”

The Committee noted the Legislative updates contained within the report.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Audit and Risk Panel

The Committee:

- noted the key issues arising at the Audit and Risk Panel meeting;
- noted that the Annual Audit Letter from the NIAO, providing a positive unqualified audit opinion on the financial statements for 2023/2024, had been received and would be published on the Council's website in line with the regulations;
- approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Audit Risk Panel of 3rd December 2024; and
- agreed that the governance arrangements between the Council and the Belfast Waterfront Hall Board be added to the assignments to be undertaken by Audit, Governance and Risk Services.

Equality and Good Relations

**Equality and Diversity: Equality Screening
and Rural Needs Outcome Report
Quarter 2 2024-25**

The Committee was reminded that the Council had a duty to have, under section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998:

- Due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity in relation to the nine equality categories; and

- Regard to the desirability of promotion good relations.

In addition, under section 1 of the Rural Needs Act (Northern Ireland) 2016:

- Due regard to rural needs when developing, adopting, implementing or revising policies, strategies and plans, and when designing and delivering public services.

To this end, the Council had a process to carry out equality screening and rural needs assessment of new and revised policies. This allowed any impacts related to equality of opportunity, good relations or rural needs to be identified and addressed.

An equality screening and rural needs impact assessment template was completed by the relevant officer, in collaboration with the Equality and Diversity Unit. On a regular basis, the Unit collates all completed templates into a screening outcome report and publishes it onto the Council's website, along with the relevant completed templates.

The Committee noted the Quarterly Screening Outcome Report which would be published on the Council's website.

Minutes of Meeting of the Shared City Partnership Meeting of 9th December

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 9th December 2024, including:

Presentation from Belfast Stories

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

Good Relations Action Plan 25/26

- The Partnership is requested to note the contents of the report and recommend that the S P & R Committee agree to the submission of the Good Relations Action Plan to The Executive Office, for delivery during 2025/26.

TEO Asylum Dispersal Funding

- The Partnership is asked to approve the proposals detailed in the report which have been forward in draft to TEO in relation to the Asylum Dispersal Fund and recommend to the S P & R Committee to agree the content and recommendation detailed in this 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.

Operational Issues

Minutes of Party Group Leaders Consultative Forum

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Party Group Leaders' Consultative Forum of 5th December.

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					
ARK for Ulster University & Queens University	24 February 2025	Celebration event for 25th anniversary of the ARK research centre (a joint centre for UU/QUB) to reflect on work, impact and users of ARK Numbers attending – 60	C	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee reception as significant anniversary
European Youth Parliament	4 March 2025	NI Regional Forum of Youth Parliament - teams of secondary students debate and present their ideas and	B & D	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		solutions on current topics. Numbers attending – 70 - 100			
Northern Ireland Screen	11 March 2025	Northern Ireland Screen’s Irish Language Broadcast Fund 20th anniversary celebration of speeches, panel discussions, networking and reception. Numbers attending – 100+	C	Room hire £450	Yes, Tea and Coffee reception as significant anniversary
JoinHer Network CIC	18 March 2025	Journeys Beyond Borders: Voices of Resilience reception with speakers and engagement to raise awareness of anti discrimination campaign and help available. Numbers attending – 50 - 70	D	Current rate free as Voluntary Community Group	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as Voluntary Community Group

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Ramadan Tent Project Ltd <i>(based in London but working with local community groups)</i>	23 March 2025	Open Iftar 2024 programme – this event aims to bring communities together, develop the understanding of Ramadan and welcoming people of all faiths and none to enjoy in the festivities of Ramadan. Festivities to celebrate Ramadan will include prayers, welcome speeches, lunch, networking. Numbers attending 250 – 400	B & D	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as charity
Translink	24 March 2025	Long Service Celebration for staff who have provided 35 year's service to Translink – Buffet dinner and presentations. Numbers attending – 120 -150		Room hire £450 or £1250 <i>dependent on room chosen</i>	No hospitality as commercial event.

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Belfast Islamic Centre	31 March 2025	Eid Unity Feast: A Celebration of Community – a dinner reception and reflections with speaker on Islam and Christianity Numbers attending – 100 -120	D	Current rate free as charity	Yes, Tea and Coffee reception as charity

Minutes of City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 27th November

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 27th November.

Minutes of City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 12th December

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group of 12th December.

Minutes of the Meeting of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre of 6th December

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the All-Party Working Group on the City Centre of 6th December.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Disability Working Group of 11th December

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Disability Working Group of 11th December.

Chairperson