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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

SUMMONS TO ATTEND THE MONTHLY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL

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

Notice is hereby given that the monthly meeting of the Council will be held in the Council Chamber, City Hall, Belfast on Thursday, 1st February, 2024 at 6.00 pm, for the transaction of the following business:

1. Summons
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Minutes of the Council (Pages 1 - 10)
5. Official Announcements
6. Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 11 - 60)
7. Minutes of People and Communities Committee (Pages 61 - 82)
8. Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 83 - 106)
9. Minutes of Licensing Committee (Pages 107 - 124)
10. Minutes of Planning Committee (Pages 125 - 140)
11. Minutes of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd Shareholders Committee (Pages 141 - 144)
12. Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 145 - 152)
13. Minutes of Standards and Business Committee (Pages 153 - 154)

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

Chief Executive

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Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall and remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Monday, 8th January, 2024 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

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

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Ferguson and McDowell declared an interest in respect of the item entitled “Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund” in that they were Members of a Belfast Orange Lodge.

Alderman Copeland declared an interest in the item “Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund”, in that her daughter was employed by the Greater Village Regeneration Trust, an applicant to the Fund.

Councillor Nic Bhranair declared an interest in the item “Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund”, in that she was an employee of Fáilte Feirste Thiar.

Councillor Gormley declared an interest in the item “Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund”, in that he was a Member of the Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group (LORAG) and it was an applicant to the Fund.

Alderman McCullough declared an interest in the Motion regarding the Ulster Bank Closures, in that he had a relative who was an employee of the bank.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 8th January, 2024**

Councillor McKeown declared an interest in relation to the item entitled “Public Health Agency Consultation on the Substance Use Strategic Commissioning and Implementation Plan – Council Response” and also in relation to the Motion regarding Fast-Track Cities, in that his employer was involved with both.

Alderman McCoubrey declared an interest in relation to the item entitled “Update on Physical Programme” in that he was a Board Member of the Black Mountain Shared Space.

The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan) declared an interest in the item “Request to Present - Forward South Partnership” in that she was an employee of that organisation.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy),
Seconded by Councillor Nic Bhranair and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 4th December, 2023, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Request to Film Proceedings

The Chief Executive reported that a request had been received from the BBC to film the proceedings of the meeting.

The Council acceded to the request.

Requests to Address the Council

Sólás Special Needs

The Chief Executive reported that a request to address the Council had been received from Dr. J. Henderson, Managing Director of Sólás Special Needs, and Ms. E. Gallagher and Ms. J. McGann, two Members of the Sólás Parent User Group. They wished to address the Council in relation to disability community services and inclusion in South Belfast.

The Council acceded to the request and, accordingly, they were welcomed to the meeting by the Lord Mayor.

Together, Ms. Gallagher and Ms. McGann outlined the fantastic services, support and advice that Sólás provided to children with autism and additional needs, as well as to the parents. They explained that the service was for people living throughout the City and that it had been an invaluable resource for them.

The Lord Mayor thanked them for their presentation and they left the meeting.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 8th January, 2024**

Financial Services Union

The Chief Executive advised that a further request to address the Council had been received from Mr. B. McDowell, Head of Communications and Public Affairs (Financial Services Union), Mr. J. O'Connell, FSU General Secretary, and Mr. J. Allsopp, FSU Sector officer for Ulster Bank. They wished to speak in relation to the Closure of Ulster Bank Branches, whereby a motion on the topic was being proposed later in the meeting.

The Council acceded to the request and, accordingly, they were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. O'Connell explained that the Financial Services Union was extremely disappointed that the Ulster Bank had announced that ten of its branches in Northern Ireland would close in 2024. He called on the Ulster Bank to reverse its decision to close the branches and highlighted that it would result in a loss of jobs, reduced in-person banking services for communities, particularly for the most vulnerable in society. He called upon the Members to support the Motion that would come before it later in the meeting.

The Lord Mayor thanked the deputation and they left the meeting.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Black,
Seconded by Councillor R. M. Donnelly,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 12th and 15th December, 2023, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Exclusion of the Press and Public

Resolved – That, in accordance with Section 42(4) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, the Council agrees to exclude the press and public from the meeting to allow consideration of confidential information in relation to the minute of the meeting of 12th December, 2023, under the heading “Belfast 2024”, and in relation to the minutes of the meeting of 15th December, 2023, under the headings “Neighbourhood Renewal Fund - South Belfast Area Working Group and East Area Working Group”, in so far as the discussion would relate to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

Belfast 2024

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Carson,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the reports associated with Belfast 2024 be referred back to both the City Growth and Regeneration Committee and the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, for consideration to be given to reprofiling the

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 8th January, 2024**

funding for the Power Plants project towards the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund.

Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund

South Belfast Area Working Group

A Member requested clarification on how officers determined whether items were to be restricted when the issue related to the allocation of public money, particularly within the context of the public perception test.

A further Member requested clarity from the Chief Executive and the City Solicitor as to whether it was possible for the Council to reprofile money from the Belfast 2024 project to the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF), when the process had already begun. The Chief Executive advised that advice would be provided to the relevant Committees in respect of that.

Amendment

Moved by the Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Groogan,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Council agrees that the following projects be progressed to Stage 3 – Delivery in South Belfast, with the allocations as stated below:

- Sólás, Special Needs Charity – Sólás New Build Project, £800,000;
- Greater Village Regeneration Trust - Branching Out project, £224,949;
- Lower Ormeau Residents' Action Group (LORAG) – Lagan Water Access Activity Hub, £224,949;
- Hearth Historic Buildings Trust – Redevelopment of Riddell's Warehouse, £224,949;
- Fitzroy Presbyterian Church - Redevelopment of Former School of Music, £224,949; and
- Market Development Association – Market Heritage Hub, £224,949.

On a vote, nineteen voted for the amendment, thirty-six against and with one no vote, it was accordingly declared lost.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 8th January, 2024**

For 19	Against 36	No Vote 1
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan); Councillors Bell, Bower, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, Flynn, Hanvey, Long, Lyons, Maghie, F. McAteer, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, McMullan, Murray, Nelson, Smyth and Whyte.	The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy); Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Black, Bradley, R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Garrett, Kelly, Magee, Maskey, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCormick, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Verner and Walsh.	Councillor McDowell

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Bunting
Seconded by Alderman Lawlor,

That the Council agrees that the following projects be progressed to Stage 3 – Delivery in South Belfast, with the allocations as stated below:

- Greater Village Regeneration Trust - Branching Out project, £500,000;
- Market Development Association – Market Heritage Hub, £500,000;
- Sólás, Special Needs Charity – Sólás New Build Project, £308, 248;
- Lower Ormeau Residents’ Action Group (LORAG) – Lagan Water Access Activity Hub, £308, 248; and
- Fitzroy Presbyterian Church - Redevelopment of Former School of Music, £308, 248.

On a vote, forty-six voted for the amendment and eleven against and it was accordingly declared carried.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 8th January, 2024**

For 46	Against 11
The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy); The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan); Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Black, Bradley, R. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Cobain, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnell, P. Donnelly, R-M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Garrett, Kelly, Lyons, Magee, Maskey, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McCormick, McDowell, McKeown, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.	Councillors Bell, Bower, T. Brooks, Hanvey, Long, Maghie, F. McAteer, McDonough-Brown, McMullan, Murray and Nelson.

East Area Working Group

At the request of Councillor Ferguson, the Council agreed that the Special Meeting of the East Area Working Group, scheduled to take place on Monday, 15th January, be postponed until the Stage 2 process for the projects had been completed.

(The Council resumed in public session at this point in proceedings)

Confirmation of Decisions

The Lord Mayor announced the decisions which had been taken during the restricted session of the Council and reminded the Members that those decisions would be subject to Call-in.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing additions, the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 12th and 15th December, 2023, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

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

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 5th December, 2023, be approved and adopted.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 8th January, 2024**

Proposal for Dual Language Street Signs

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Ó Néill,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Council agrees that a Dual Language Street sign also be erected at Knock Eden Park and that a resurveying of the street not be carried out.

On a recorded vote, forty Members voted for the proposal and seventeen against and it was declared carried.

For 40	Against 17
The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy); Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Harvey, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, R. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.	Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; Councillors R. Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Kelly, McCormick, McDowell, I. McLaughlin and Verner.

A Member requested that the officers would consider the removal of the statistics on “those who did not respond” to a proposed Dual Language Street Sign survey within future reports.

**Applications for Dual Language Street Signs for
Ballysillan Road, Ebor Street and Sunningdale Park North**

Moved by Councillor Doran,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the Council agrees that no surveys should be carried out on the grounds of the potential adverse impacts identified in relation to both Ballysillan Road and Ebor Street, and that those two applications are closed.

On a recorded vote, seventeen Members voted for the proposal and forty-one against and it was declared lost.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 8th January, 2024**

For 17	Against 41
Aldermen Copeland, Lawlor, McCoubrey, McCullough and Rodgers; Councillors R. Brooks, Bunting, Cobain, Doran, D. Douglas, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Kelly, McCormick, McDowell, I. McLaughlin and Verner.	The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murphy); The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Groogan); Councillors Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley, Canavan, Carson, Collins, de Faoite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, R-M Donnelly, Duffy, Flynn, Garrett, Gormley, Hanvey, Long, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McCabe, McCann, McDonough-Brown, McKeown, R. McLaughlin, McMullan, Murray, Nelson, Nic Bhranair, Ó Néill, Smyth, Walsh and Whyte.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 5th December, 2023, were approved and adopted.

Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nic Bhranair,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 6th December, 2023, be approved and adopted.

Update on the Fleadh Cheoil

Moved by Councillor Nic Bhranair,
Seconded by Councillor Duffy and

Resolved - that the Council agrees to expand the officer and Elected Member representation at the 2024 events.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing amendment, the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 6th December, 2023, were approved and adopted.

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 8th January, 2024**

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor McKeown,
Seconded by Councillor McCabe and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 13th December, 2023, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Carson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 12th December, 2023, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Climate and City Resilience Committee

Moved by Councillor Róis-Máire Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 7th December, 2023, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Councillor McDonough-Brown,
Seconded by Alderman Rodgers and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 4th January, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Motions

Fast-Track Cities

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor P. Donnelly proposed:

“This Council recognises that ending the HIV epidemic requires a comprehensive approach that allows all those in need, to access quality lifesaving treatment, enhances prevention, care, and support services for HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and viral hepatitis. Council further recognises that integrating these services into sexual, reproductive, and mental health services is critical to achieving universal access to health care. This Council seeks to eliminate stigma and discrimination by building on scientific evidence. Understanding that

**Meeting of Council,
Monday, 8th January, 2024**

successful HIV treatment and viral suppression prevents HIV transmission which can help reduce stigma and encourage people living with HIV to initiate and adhere to HIV treatment. Therefore, this Council will sign up to the Paris Declaration supporting the FastTrack Cities aim of eliminating the stigma associated with HIV and AIDS as well as aiming for no new HIV diagnosis by 2030.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor R-M. Donnelly.

After discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and passed.

Ulster Bank Closures

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor G. McAteer proposed:

“This Council notes its concern with Ulster Banks decision to close another ten of its branches resulting in the loss of 21 jobs and removal of access to cash and face to face services; acknowledges that the move towards increased digitalisation will make it harder for small businesses to access finance and for people to access cash, advice and ATM services; recognises the worrying trend that 52 branches across various banks have closed in the last three years; and

Calls on this Council to support the Financial Services Unions (FSU) and to write to Ulster Bank calling on them to reverse these closures, protect jobs and maintain its branch network; and supports efforts that would protect our local communities and prevent further branch closures in the next few years.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Gormley.

At the request of the proposer, the Council agreed that a letter would also be sent to the Commissioner for Older People.

After discussion, the motion was put to the meeting and passed.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 19th January, 2024

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Ms. S. Grimes, Director of Property and Projects;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City Operations;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 15th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 8th January, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Items

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

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.

Presentation by Living with Water Team

The Committee considered a report and associated presentation from the Living with Water Team in relation to a review process which was currently underway on the Strategic Drainage Infrastructure for Belfast, and which was being undertaken due to affordability issues.

After discussion, the Committee

- noted the presentation regarding the review of the LWW programme which was currently underway;
- agreed that the Living with Water Team be invited to present also to both the Planning and the Climate and City Resilience Committees; and
- that the Permanent Secretary for Department of Infrastructure be invited to attend a meeting of the Committee to discuss the review of the programme.

**Update on Temporary Contracts
and Agency Workers**

The Director of Human Resources submitted for the Committee's consideration a report providing an update on the number of employees on temporary contracts and agency assignees engaged by the Council and outlining the steps being taken to reduce the Council's reliance on those two categories.

She reported that, as at 31st December, 2023 staff had been filling posts on a temporary basis, 122 of whom had substantive Council posts to return to when no longer required. The other 90 were fixed term contract employees who did not have a substantive post to return to. Between 1st October and 31st December, 26 staff had joined the Council

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

on a temporary contract, with 13 having a substantive post and 13 being on fixed term contracts.

She reported further that 283 agency assignees had been engaged by the Council at 31st December, 29 of whom were seasonal workers. She outlined the cost of employing agency assignees for the three-month period ending on 31st December and pointed out that this did not represent a financial burden, as it was met through departmental underspends.

The Director then stated that the Corporate Contract Manager, who had been in post since February, had established regular compliance and challenge meetings across Departments, with a view to driving down long-term agency usage and that data was being reviewed to assess the potential for creating some permanent flexible roles.

She went on to remind the Committee that the Commercial Team within the Commercial and Procurement Service was working with Corporate HR to provide a comprehensive overview of the 'status quo' in relation to the managed service in place for the provision of temporary agency workers for a diverse range of job roles. In addition, further research into in-house employment agencies, which might be used in other organisations, was ongoing. For example, extensive benchmarking relating to operational models that been established to manage interim and temporary staffing requirements had been conducted. This included several joint ventures that had been established by Commercial Services Group, which was wholly owned by Kent County Council, and a preliminary review of information relation to financial modelling for joint ventures and in-house models. It was anticipated that this exercise would be completed before the end of quarter 4 and presented to the Committee as soon as possible thereafter.

After discussion, the Committee noted the information which had been provided.

Pay and Grading Review

The Committee considered a report which provided details of the proposed new Pay and Grading structure for NJC staff on Belfast City Council Terms and Conditions and seeking Committee approval to make a formal offer to the Trades Unions for this proposed model.

After a lengthy discussion, the Committee agreed:

- that officers evaluate the impact of a further non-consolidated payment to staff on salary scale points 36, 44, 52 and 58, ahead of the Special Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting to be held on 26th January; and
- To defer the decision on the Pay and Grading proposals.

Update on Special West Belfast Area Working Group – Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund Stage 2 Development

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the West Belfast Area Working Group of 11th January, including the following recommendations relating to the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund:

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

- i. To note the update on the Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund;
- ii. To note the information on the Stage 2 projects;
- iii. To recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that the following projects be progressed to *Stage 3 - Delivery* in West – Shankill, with the allocations as stated:
 - The ACT Initiative - The ACT Initiative Community Hub and Visitor Centre, £295,000
 - Lower Shankill Community Association – The Road, £210,759
 - Glencairn Community Project – Glencairn Community Hub, £200,000
- iv. To note the Stage 3 process and that the projects and allocations are to be reviewed in 12 months' time; and
- v. To note the approach regarding feedback and support to those groups that are not progressing to Stage 3 – Delivery.

**Revenue Estimates 2024/25 and
Medium-Term Financial Plan**

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

After discussion, it was

Moved by Councillor Beattie
Seconded by Councillor Long

That the Committee:

1. Agrees the £2m growth proposals as outlined in paragraph 3.3 of the report;
2. Agrees the £1.8m efficiency proposals as outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the report;
3. Agrees to a domestic rate increase of 5.44% for 2024/25;
4. Agrees to recommend the following cash limits for 2024/25 subject to the impact of the decisions made on items 2 and 3 above:
 - a. A cash limit of £54,550,808 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2024/25, including £1,270,000 for Belfast Investment Fund and £3,000,000 for City Deal.
 - b. A cash limit of £105,332,936 for the People and Communities Committee for 2024/25.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

- c. A cash limit of £ 21,550,927 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2024/45.
 - d. A cash limit of £2,344,219 for the Planning Committee for 2024/25.
 - e. A Capital Financing Budget of £22,274,022 for 2024/25.
5. Agrees to a Medium-Term Financial Strategy update in March 2024;
 6. Agrees the next steps to be taken as outlined in paragraph of the report;
 7. Agrees that these decisions (as indicated above) should not be subject to call-in because it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15 February 2024.

On a vote, 18 Members voted for the proposal and none against, with two no votes, and it was declared carried.

North Foreshore Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the current status of the leisure led commercial brief on the North Foreshore by the preferred developer Giant's Park Belfast Limited.

The Committee:

1. Noted that the Master Development Agreement (MDA) had been finalised with Giants Park Belfast Limited (GPBL) and was due to be signed and sealed, along with all supporting documents, by the end of the month. The MDA requires GPBL to deliver the uses identified in their submission within a prescribed timeframe; and
2. Noted that a detailed update outlining the programme would be brought to the Committee next month and that regular updates on progress would be brought into the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the Castle, Cavehill and North Foreshore Steering Group and the Area Working Group as appropriate.

Consumer and Product Safety

The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services submitted a report seeking the Committee's authority to repurpose existing officer roles within the consumer advice service, which had been paused since 2020, to support the Council's enhanced statutory responsibilities in relation to investigating consumer complaints and referrals from statutory bodies and providing advice to consumers and businesses on consumer product safety matters.

The Committee granted the authority sought.

PEACEPLUS and Shared Island Update

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy submitted for the Committee's consideration a report which provided an update in relation to the current Belfast City Council involvement across the PEACEPLUS and Shared Island funding programmes. The report also outlined proposals in relation to the continued engagement with Members in developing a pipeline of corporate candidate projects for emerging funding opportunities.

The Committee:

- i. noted the update provided in relation to the PEACEPLUS and Shared Island Funding Programmes; and
- ii. agreed that officers continue to circulate relevant funding opportunities with all elected members to disseminate and share with local organisations to help access funding.

Belfast 2024 Update

The Committee considered a report which provided a further update on recent developments and issues previously raised regarding the Belfast 2024 programme. Specifically in relation to the following:

1. Belfast 2024 Marcomms Update
2. Civic Engagement (including Participatory Budgeting and Civic profiling)
3. The Walk Productions – Little Amal license and delivery
4. Belfast 2024 Income Update – Heritage Lottery Fund

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the Belfast 2024 updates, that is, Marcomms and Civic Participation and Engagement:
- Granted approval for Walk Productions to bring Little Amal to Belfast 2024 from Belfast to Dublin for up to £225k;
- Noted the update on fundraising for 2024; and
- Agreed that consideration be given to bring forward the launch date for the media campaign for the programme.

Waste Collections – Purpose Built Student Accommodation

The Committee considered a report which sought approval to introduce waste collection at Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBMSA).

PBMSA was a relatively new phenomenon in the city. As such the legislation which governed the way in which waste was categorised did not explicitly address how to treat

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

the waste from such premises. The Council had previously treated this waste as being household waste and therefore did not implement charging.

Given the amount of PBMSA in the city, officers had reviewed the position again to ensure that its position in respect of charging was appropriate and lawful.

The Committee:

- 1) Noted the contents of the report;
- 2) Agreed that the Council would begin charging for collection of waste from Purpose Built Managed Student Accommodation commencing on 1st April 2024; and
- 3) Noted that a further report would be brought to next month's meeting setting out the charging details.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Motion – Memorial Wall – Covid 19

The Members were informed that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 4th January, had considered the following motion which had been received for submission to the Council on 8th January:

"This Council recognises the pain, suffering and loss caused during the Covid-19 pandemic and the trauma of those bereaved and those still suffering with long covid. This Council will facilitate a memorial wall which allows people to remember their loved ones."

The motion had been proposed by Councillor Emmet McDonough-Brown and seconded by Councillor Christine Bower.

As the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee was responsible for managing and maintaining the corporate land bank and city assets, including the City Hall, and for allocating resources based on the corporate and city priorities, the motion was referred, in the first instance, to this Committee.

The Committee agreed that report on potential options and associated costs be submitted to a future meeting.

**Quiet Streets – Rosetta Way; and
Controlled Crossing – Knockbreda Road-
Response from Department for Infrastructure**

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services reminded the Members that the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 11th October, had noted correspondence which had been received from Mr. Graeme Salmon and from Ms. Julie Harrison, dated 4th May and 29th August respectively, in

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

response to the Council's request for a controlled crossing at Knockbreda Road and the creation of a Rosetta Way "Quietway".

The Council, at its meeting on 1st November, in considering the minutes of that meeting, had agreed that a letter be forwarded to the Department for Infrastructure, calling on it to:

- i. initiate the actions required for the delivery of the Rosetta Way "Quietway";
- ii. proceed with the implementation of Quiet Streets/Low Traffic Neighbourhoods and other road safety schemes at a local level, rather than await the outcome of the review of such schemes in England, which had been initiated by the Prime Minister; and
- iii. provide information on the timeline for the completion of the design and audit of the agreed puffin crossing on the Knockbreda Road and proceed to install the crossing as soon as possible thereafter.

The Council had agreed also that the Department be requested to respond to the correspondence which had been forwarded to it on 11th July, following the adoption by the Standards and Business Committee, on 27th June, of a motion on the Standard of Repairs to Roads and Footpaths.

Accordingly, Democratic Services wrote to the Permanent Secretary. A response has been received, on his behalf, from the Divisional Roads Manager, a copy of which was appended to the report.

In his response he advises that currently the limited staff resources for active travel in the Belfast area was focused on the delivery of the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan short term scheme list.

While they were also working closely with councils to better understand their 5 - year greenway programme, there was currently no policy for the introduction of 'Quiet Streets', and they had no plans to consider the implementation of any schemes.

Regarding the controlled crossing on Knockbreda Road, as highlighted in the letter dated 4 May 2023, the Department was now focusing its attention on a crossing situated close to the Knock Eden Park junction on Knockbreda Road and had instructed its consultants to carry out the detailed design and a further safety audit for this location.

He further advised that this had now been received and would be brought before Eastern Divisions approval 'A Group' system, in January 2024. Following that, they would write to Belfast City Council to advise on progress and the effect on adjacent residents, so the Council could carry out its consultation.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

The Committee noted the response and agreed that the Department for Infrastructure be advised that the Council had already consulted with the residents adjacent to the proposed controlled crossing at Knockbreda Road and would not be undertaking any further consultation.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Chief Officer Recruitment

The Committee considered a report which sought permission to recruit the posts of Director (Operational) of City and Neighbourhood Services (two posts) and City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services and for the constitution of the selection panels.

The Committee agreed:

- 1) that the posts of Director (Operational) of City and Neighbourhood Services, (two posts) and City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services be recruited on a permanent basis and that the selection panels for the posts comprise the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (or their nominees); and one additional elected member from the Committee from a political party not already represented by the Chair and Deputy Chair; along with the Chief Executive (or his nominee) and a Council Director;
- 2) that Councillor Whyte be appointed as the additional elected member for the City and Neighbourhood posts and Councillor Maghie for the City Solicitor post; and
- 3) that the recruitment of Chief Officer posts would no longer be advertised in the local papers.

Consultation on Non-domestic and Domestic rating measures to support budget sustainability by raising additional revenue

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

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 **The purpose of this report is to ask the Committee to approve the draft response to the Consultation on Non-domestic and Domestic rating measures to support budget sustainability by raising additional revenue.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- (i) consider the draft consultation response which has been submitted as a draft response in-line with the closing date for consultation; and**
- (ii) approve its formal submission, subject to any comments or amendments provided at Committee.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 In September 2023 the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland wrote to Permanent Secretaries of Northern Ireland Departments directing that they launch public consultations on measures to support budget sustainability by raising additional revenue.

3.2 On the 11th of October the Department of Finance published a document setting out the financial context for the revenue raising consultations. This was followed on the 7th of November 2023 with the launch of a 14-week consultation on the revenue raising potential associated with the removal of rating measures. The consultation is seeking views from those who may be directly affected and from the wider body of ratepayers. There are seven proposals for changes to rating measures identified by the Secretary of State:

Domestic sector:

- Maximum Capital Value cap.**
- Early Payment Discount,**
- Landlords Allowance,**

Non-domestic sector:

- Industrial Derating,**
- Non-domestic Vacant Rate relief,**
- Freight Transport relief,**
- Halls of Residence exemption.**

The closing date for this consultation is the 13th of February 2024.

3.4 In addition, the Department is seeking views on four questions relating to the overall fiscal position.

- **Is there other revenue raising measures that should be considered?**
- **Are there any services/ programmes that should be stopped or reduced to divert funding to more critical services?**
- **Are there public services that could be delivered in a different way?**
- **Are there public services that could be delivered by others (e.g. local government, voluntary and community sector or private sector) or are there are other areas in which greater collaboration could deliver better outcomes?**

3.5 The consultation response has been by David Magor, IRRV, on behalf of the council based on City Council responses in the past, various committee minutes and comments from members at LPS briefings.

3.6 Appendix 1 presents the Councils proposed response to the consultation, incorporating the Notice of Motion approved at SP&R on 15th December 2023 as the response to question one, removal of the £400k cap.

3.7 Appendix 2 and 3 are the consultation documents produced by the Department of Finance.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.8 None

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

3.9 To be determined by the Department of Finance.”

The Committee:

- (i) considered the draft consultation response [here](#) which has been submitted as a draft response in-line with the closing date for consultation; and
- (ii) approved its formal submission, subject to the amendment to question three in the response to provide that greater powers are available to the department to ensure businesses progress developments and reduce the amount of time properties remain vacant.

Overdose Prevention Facilities

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise the Committee on the legal considerations in relation to the overdose prevention facilities.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to:

- Note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 At its meeting on March 2023, the Council adopted the following Notice of Motion:

‘This Council supports the establishment of an Overdose Prevention Facility in Belfast. This Council will work with key partners in the community, voluntary and statutory sector to bring together a partnership to advocate for the establishment of an Overdose Prevention Facility (OPC) for the city. With almost 350 drug related deaths in the city from 2017-2021 and over 1,000 needles recovered each month, a facility like this will save lives and reduce the amount of discarded drug debris. There are over 200 Overdose Prevention Facilities in 14 countries across the world.

While we are conscious that the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 is an inhibitor to the establishment of this service and that it would require some form of special legal dispensation from the Act for the facility to be lawful, it is clear that current policy is not saving lives. In the absence of a local Assembly to deliver reform and innovation that can save vulnerable lives, this Council will act as a civic leader by requesting our City Solicitor and Chief Executive to engage with partners and to lobby Belfast Trust, PSNI, the Departments of Health and Justice and the Attorney General to make the case for special dispensation.

‘That this Council facilitates an open call to organisations who wish to be involved in the setting up of such a facility to work together to draft a proposal on what this service would include,

centred on providing overdose prevention facilities and wrap around support services for those in need, and to write to the relevant agencies to urge them to provide multi-year funding for the Complex Lives strategy.'

- 3.2 Further, at its meeting on 14th November 2023, the Committee asked for an update on progress in respect of this Notice of Motion with specific reference to meetings held, legal advice sought and partners engaged with in relation to the Notice of Motion.

Legal position

- 3.3 Overdose Prevention Facilities are supervised facilities where individuals can go to safely consume drugs under supervision of trained staff who can intervene to prevent overdose. At present no such facility exists in Northern Ireland and the Misuse of Drugs Act 1971 ('the 1971 Act') is the legislation which governs controlled drugs.
- 3.4 The 1971 Act and has the effect of prohibiting such a facility from operating as those operating the premises would be at risk of prosecution. The following are criminal offences under the 1971 Act:
- To be in possession of a controlled drug
 - For an individual as either an occupier or being concerned in the management of premises from knowingly permitting activities of production, supply, and use of controlled drugs;
 - An occupier or manager of premises must do everything they can reasonably do to prevent the production, supply and use of controlled drugs on said premises; and
 - To supply any article, other than a hypodermic syringe, to a user for them to administer the drug.
- 3.5 It is clear having regard to these offences that currently the operating of an Overdose Prevention Facility would lead to a number of criminal offences on the part of the occupier and any staff.
- 3.6 Any individual found to be in possession of a controlled drug or operating an Overdose Prevention Facility is liable to prosecution if the Public Prosecution Service for Northern Ireland determine that the two-tier test for prosecution is met.

The two-tier test for prosecution is:

1. **Evidential Test** – the evidence which can be adduced in court is sufficient to provide a reasonable prospect of conviction.
 2. **Public Interest Test** – prosecution is required in the public interest.
- 3.7 In order for an Overdose Prevent Facility to be operated lawfully, there would have to be legislative change. However the overall drug policy is a retained matter and the Government has confirmed that it does not intend to amend the 1971 Act to enable Overdose Prevention Facilities to open.
- 3.8 In Scotland however the Lord Advocate, who is the equivalent of the Attorney General, has recently advised that she will introduce policy for prosecutors in Scotland to the effect that it would not be in the public interest to prosecute drug users for simple possession offences within a pilot safer drugs consumption facility.
- 3.9 This policy is caveated to the pilot scheme of safer drugs consumptions facilities only and does not extend to any criminal offences other than possession of controlled substances.
- 3.10 In Northern Ireland there has been no indication from the Attorney General that such a policy will be introduced in this jurisdiction. A meeting has been arranged between the Attorney General and the Chief Executive, together with other senior officers, on 15th January 2024 and a verbal update will be provided at the Committee meeting.
- 3.11 Members will be aware of the work being taken forward through community planning (Belfast Agenda) to help vulnerable people who may be homeless and have complex needs due to the use of drugs and alcohol. The Complex Lives project seeks to build a one vulnerability model which helps the most vulnerable people to get access to necessary support in holistic and integrated way including housing, addiction support, mental health support and healthcare. Complex Lives seeks to help those most vulnerable who have very challenging needs and many live chaotic lives. They are amongst the hardest to reach, with many not engaging with services that are available to them. Complex Lives improves collaborative working between statutory bodies, voluntary sector organisations and service providers so as to provide the

right support to people who need it at the right time and in the right place.

3.12 Financial and Resource Implications

None at this stage

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

None.”

After discussion, during which several Members expressed the need for such a facility in the city and research to be undertaken on where a facility could be located, the Committee noted the contents of the report and that engagement would continue to take place with all the relevant agencies and stakeholders to advocate for such a facility in Belfast.

Belfast Region City Deal – update

The Chief Executive submitted for the Committee’s consideration the following 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 on the Council’s Augment the City SME Challenge Competition**
- **Note the update in respect of programme communication and the BRCD Council Panel**

3.0 Main report

3.1 As previously reported to the Committee, the BRCD Programme is now well into delivery with significant progress made to date. Belfast City Council (BCC) as the Lead Authority and Accountable Body has continued to support the delivery of the programme. A total of 15 Outline Business Cases (OBC) are now approved, with eight Contracts for Funding (CfF) signed and first £3m of claims paid to individual projects.

Progress across BRCD Pillars since previous report

Innovation

- 3.2 OBC approvals and CfFs are in place for four of the five innovation projects, with a number now moving quickly towards to construction and operation.
- 3.3 Following approval for planning for the Factory of the Future site at Global Point in Newtownabbey and contract award for the Pre-Construction, the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) has now formally submitted its Full Business Case to the Department for Economy (DfE) for review and approval, with plans for construction work commencing on site in Spring 2024. AMIC has also now completed its Gateway 3 Investment Decision review and was provided with a green RAG rating.
- 3.4 Construction work on Studio Ulster also continues to progress well at the Belfast Harbour site and a competitive dialogue process has commenced for the appointment of a supplier for the design, development, supply & installation of equipment for Studio Ulster which will now be operated by Ulster University, via Studio Ulster Ltd. Detailed work has commenced in relation to the Full Business Case which will be submitted to the DfE for review and approval in the coming weeks.
- 3.5 iREACH Health has continued to progress well through RIBA Stage 4. In December, Queen's University (QUB) awarded a contract for its works contractor under the Early Contractor Involvement approach. QUB has also submitted its planning application for the Lisburn Road site and are progressing work around site acquisition. Work on the Full Business Case has also commenced.
- 3.6 In relation to GII, QUB are nearing completion of RIBA Stage 3 and is working to launch its Industry Advisory Board. Discussions are ongoing relating to utilities to support the development.
- 3.7 Following approval by the Executive Board, the CDHT OBC2 was submitted to Government partners by Ulster University and following detailed review successfully received approval from DfE– the OBC is now being reviewed by the Department of Finance.

Digital

- 3.8 The i4c Cleantech Centre at St Patrick's Barracks, received approval for its OBC in November 2023. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (MEABC) have continued to work at risk to progress and published the ITT Documentation for its Integrated Consultant Team in December 2023. Work has now commenced in relation to drafting the CfF.
- 3.9 The Council has now signed a £928,373 contract for Belfast Region City Deal Digital funding with the Department for Economy to deliver the 'Augment the City' SME challenge competition. The competition, which will launch in early Spring 2024 and run for one year, will provide R&D funding to up to ten local companies, to work with Belfast's tourism partners to develop cutting-edge immersive technologies (such as Virtual or Augmented Reality) that could enhance future tourism investments.
- 3.10 The companies with the most promising proposals will also have the opportunity to test their prototypes directly with visitors to the City Hall Visitor Exhibition later in 2024. Funding has been provided under the contract to equip three rooms in the exhibition space with the necessary wireless connectivity to support these state of the art technologies.
- 3.11 Members should note that under the terms of the contract with DfE, Belfast City Council has signed an Operating Partnership Agreement with the Centre of Procurement Excellence for Small Business Research Initiatives to effectively manage the competition.
- 3.12 Members are also asked to note that following a public procurement process, a contract has now been agreed with Digital Catapult to provide the necessary technical expertise to support the companies, and the city's tourism partners to maximise the research and commercialisation impact of the competition.
- 3.13 A draft business case in relation to a potential BRCD Venture Fund is being developed and engagement is taking place on this with Invest NI. A partner workshop, involving representation from all BRCD partners, Government and industry (and facilitated by Catalyst Inc) was held in December 2023 in order to initiate the development of proposals for an R&D Grants programme to support SMEs across the region. This is also being led by the Council's City Innovation team.

- 3.14 As reported previously to SP&R, BCC was also successful in securing £3.8m funding to support the Belfast Region as a 5G Innovation Region.

Tourism and Regeneration

- 3.15 As reported previously, OBC approvals and CfFs are in place for the Carrickfergus, Newry City Centre and Bangor Waterfront regeneration projects.
- 3.16 The Gobbins received approval for the OBC in November 2023, a significant milestone for this project. Following receipt of this approval, work has been progressing with Tourism NI and DfE to agree the CfF for this project by February. MEABC have progressed the procurement of the design team for this project at risk and following completion of the ITT moderation in December, the final tender reports are being prepared and MEABC will be in a position to appoint the ICT by mid-February following Council approval and providing the Contract for Funding has been agreed.
- 3.17 Following OBC approval the procurement strategy for Destination Royal Hillsborough (DRH) has been agreed and the procurement documentation for the design teams is being prepared. Work has also been progressing with Tourism NI and DfE to agree the CfF for this project by February.
- 3.18 Following the unprecedented flooding across the Newry, Mourne and Down District and the priority given to supporting recovery from this incident, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (NMDDC) have not been in a position to progress the addendum to the Mourne Mountain Gateway Project (MMGP) OBC as expected. NMDDC have however progressed with procurement of the design team and the procurement documentation was issued to market last week.
- 3.19 Progress in relation to procurement of Integrated Consultancy Teams (ICTs) and Integrated Supply Teams (ISTs) continues across the tourism and regeneration projects:
- Bangor Waterfront have completed the pre-qualification process for the ICT for Ballyholme Yacht Club and Pickie Fun Park. The ITT documentation has been issued for Ballyholme Yacht Club and the ITT documentation is being prepared for Pickie Fun Park for issue in March to align with Operator appointments. Ards and North Down Borough Council have engaged external support to assist in the procurement of the Operator for the Marina and Pickie Fun Park so that

Operators are in place to input into the design development process for both projects. The pre-qualification process for the Operator for the Marina concluded in December with ITT documents to be issued this month and pre-qualification documentation for Pickie Fun Park is to be issued at the end of January.

- Belfast Stories appointed their ICT and Design Assurance teams in November and design development has commenced.
- Carrickfergus appointed their ICT in December and project initiation meetings are underway. MEABC have also set up a Working Group and have appointed Excellence in Work to develop the preferred Operating Model for Carrickfergus, which is also likely to include Gobbins and the final recommendation is expected over the coming months.
- The ITT documents for the IST for the Theatre and Conference for Newry Regeneration were issued in December and the pre-qualification moderation for the Civic Hub was completed in December with ITT documentation being finalised for issue this month. A planning application has been submitted for both projects and engagement with planners is ongoing to provide any supplementary information required.

Subsidy Control

3.20 As previously discussed, following introduction of the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and the subsequent legal advice to government departments on the need for subsidy assessments to be completed before signing of the CfF, significant work on development of subsidy assessments, has been ongoing in parallel with the drafting of contracts for the tourism projects.

- The subsidy assessment for the MMGP was referred as a Subsidy of Particular Interest to the Competition and Market Authority (CMA) in November and the CMA published their report on the subsidy assessment on Friday 12th January.
- The subsidy assessment for Gobbins has been prepared and following consideration of the CMA report on the MMGP subsidy assessment, the Gobbins subsidy assessment will also be referred to the CMA as a Subsidy of Particular Interest. A draft assessment is at an advanced stage of preparation and will be completed following review of feedback on the assessment for the MMGP.

- Following discussions with the CMA, DfE State Aid Unit and BCC Legal advisors, Legal advice is being taken to determine whether the projects within the DRH programme can be considered separately as separate Subsidies of Interest. If agreed, a subsidy assessment against the seven principles will still be required for each project, but the subsidy assessments would not require a mandatory referral to the CMA, instead the details of the subsidy would be uploaded to the transparency database only, allowing quicker progression to signing CfF.

3.21 In addition to the work progressed above for Tourism projects, the Innovation projects which are at or are approaching FBC submission stage have progressed work and have sought advice in relation to Subsidy Control (including AMIC and Studio Ulster).

Infrastructure

3.22 As previously reported the OBC is being updated by Department for Infrastructure (DfI) for Belfast Rapid Transit Phase 2 and feasibility studies are being completed on the extensions to Glengormley and Carryduff as requested by the last Minister. Work is also ongoing to determine the city centre routes in order to align with the Eastern Transport Plan, Bolder Vision for Belfast and proposed public realm projects.

3.23 An external peer review exercise, similar to a Gateway 2, was completed for Lagan Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge in preparation for procurement of a design and build contractor. The resulting action plan has been circulated and the programme was updated and the current target to appoint a design and build contractor is late 2024. The pre-tender cost was developed in September and has identified significant cost increases for this project. An addendum to the OBC has been prepared to reflect this increased cost and DfI have submitted a proposal to cover the funding shortfall from the active travel budget.

3.24 Following confirmation from DfI that its preferred option for the bridge on the Newry Southern Relief Road is a non-opening 50m fixed bridge, work is proceeding to finalise the draft Statutory Orders and Environmental Impact Assessment Report in advance of their publication and statutory public consultation, currently anticipated for publication in Spring 2024. Prior to completion of the final design stage, DfI held a Community Information Event from 16-18 October, to provide

an opportunity for stakeholders to view the emerging final scheme proposals for the Road.

Employability and Skills (E&S)

- 3.25 The skills assessment process which is now being conducted on a cross-deal basis to understand the labour and skills implications of the city deal investment projects is continuing to progress, but timeframes have been impacted by the vacancy in the E&S Programme Manager post. As reported previously two further skills assessments, aligned to Advanced Manufacturing and Creative Industries sectors, are nearing completion utilising this approach. An Advanced Manufacturing Skills Assessment has been completed and will be shared for approval with the BRCD E&S Board in the coming weeks. The Creative Industries (Virtual Production) assessment is refining its emerging recommendations, with the aim of a final report to the Task and Finish Group this month.
- 3.26 The £7.5m Digital Transformation Flexible Fund project (with £6m from the Complementary Fund, £1.1m from DAERA and £451K from Derry and Strabane City Deal) involving all 11 Councils, led by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, has been approved and was formally launched in November 2023. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, on behalf of the partners, are also working with Council colleagues to ensure alignment with the new Enterprise Support Service, Go Succeed.

Communications and Engagement

- 3.27 As the deal is now in delivery stage it is important to refocus on communication and engagement at both programme and project level. Support has been commissioned to support the development of a Strategic Engagement Plan with an initial focus on local businesses and industry. The first Industry Engagement event is a business breakfast scheduled for Thursday 29 February 2024. Further plans will also be developed to engage with elected members across the region to update on progress and identify further priorities and areas of future investment.

BRCD Council Panel

- 3.28 The next meeting of the Council Panel will be held on 31st January 2024, hosted by Belfast City Council. At the meeting members will be provided with a programme update, an overview of the plans for strategic engagement and a

presentation on Belfast City Council's flagship tourism project Belfast Stories. Following the meeting there will be an opportunity to take a tour of Belfast Stories.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.29 All costs associated with the BRCD 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**

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

'BRCD 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.

Alleygates - Phase V

The Committee was reminded that the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services presented a report to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in November 2023 on Phase 5 of the Alleygates programme. After discussion, the Committee had:

- I. agreed to proceed with the publication of a Gating Order for the installation of gates in those streets where the threshold for responses to the consultation had been 40% and above;
- II. agreed to proceed with a ten-week consultation exercise for all remaining streets, using canvassers, local community groups etc., with Members to be informed when that process had commenced; and
- III. noted that a report would be submitted to its next monthly meeting on the terms of reference for a local inquiry, where an objection to a proposed Gating Order had been received.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

To date, the Council had not received a formal challenge of merit during any previous phase of alleygating, however, due to the unprecedented number of objections received during this consultation phase, there was an increased likelihood that a number of challenges might be received. Receipt of a challenge would necessitate the Council holding a local inquiry, which, to date, has not been necessary in previous phases.

A draft Terms of Reference for any local inquiry is set out below:

Appendix 1

Alleygating Phase 5 Inquiry: Terms of Reference

The Inquiry will examine, consider and report on Belfast City Council's decision to place alleygates on [insert street name] pursuant to its powers under Part 1 of the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, Section 69D (5) & (6).

The 2011 Act provides that *if, before the expiration of 30 days the district council receives an objection from any person on whom a copy of the notice is required to be served or from any other person appearing to be affected, it shall cause a local Inquiry to held unless the objection is withdrawn.* However,

The Council is only required to hold a local Inquiry where an objection is received from the occupiers of premises adjacent to or adjoining the road and it is considered necessary to hold an Inquiry to consider the proposed order and the issues raised in the objection in more detail. The decision as to whether it is necessary to hold an Inquiry in such circumstances will be for elected members to determine.

The Council must however hold an Inquiry of the objection is received from the owner of any cables, wires, mains, pipes or other apparatus placed along, across, over or under any road to which the order applies.

Any Inquiry shall be held in accordance with the provisions of Schedule A1 of the Interpretation Act (Northern Ireland) 1954, a copy of which is attached to these Terms of Reference.

In carrying out its work, the Inquiry will consider the views and opinions of residents, statutory undertakers, the PSNI, NIFRS and other statutory bodies, and other persons who are directly affected by the installation of alleygates at this location, whilst also affording Belfast City Council with the opportunity to explain its rationale for installing alleygates at this location. The Inquiry will determine, having taken into account the views and opinions of affected persons, whether the objection received on (insert date) has merit and warrants Belfast City Council reversing its decision, or whether Belfast City Council is justified in proceeding with the installation of alleygates at this location.

In meeting its aims, the Inquiry will:

- a) Consider and examine the content of the objection received and afford said objector with an opportunity to further elaborate on his/her concerns;
- b) Consider the evidence available to Belfast City Council, and all steps taken in preparing to make the gating order, which informed its decision to install alleygates at this location, to include allowing Council officers an opportunity to address the Inquiry;
- c) Consider the opinion of other affected residents within the locality and their views on the advantages/disadvantages of installing alleygates at this location;
- d) Consider the opinions of other interested parties, such as (but not limited to) PSNI, NIFRS and other statutory bodies as to the advantages/ disadvantages of installing alleygates at this location;
- e) Produce its report and any recommendations in a timely manner.

The aims of the Inquiry are to:

1. Examine Belfast City Council's decision to install alleygates at the location in accordance with the Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, in light of an objection received from an effected resident within said location, and produce a report which shall deal with the following:
 - (i) Consider whether there is evidence of persistent crime and anti-social behaviour at this location;
 - (ii) Determine whether or not the objection received, taking into consideration the views and expressions offered during this inquiry by persons identified as being affected, carries considerable merit or otherwise;
 - (iii) Having considered all opinions expressed during the inquiry, and the evidence (both written and oral) offered, make a recommendation to Belfast City Council as to whether it should make the gating order either without modifications or subject to such modifications as the Inquiry thinks fit.

Outcomes of the Inquiry:

2.
 - (i) Produce a report from the chair of the Inquiry in a timely manner stating his/her views as to whether Belfast City Council are justified in continuing to make the gating order either without modification or subject to such modifications as the inquiry thinks fit;
 - (iii) Make said report available to Belfast City Council to allow it to make an informed decision as to whether or not to proceed with the installation of alleygates at this location;
 - (iii) Identify the lessons to be learned from the above to inform any future Alleygating scheme;
 - (iv) Although the Inquiry's recommendations will only be applicable for Belfast City Council and affect those within the location identified for gating, it's recommendations may have relevance for other councils within the jurisdiction.

The Committee approved the draft Terms of Reference.

**Innovate UK funding opportunity to scope
a Net Zero Shipping Corridor between Belfast
and Liverpool and to resubmit an application to
the Net Zero Living Places fund**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update members on a funding opportunity from Innovate UK to support the development of a Net Zero shipping corridor between Liverpool and Belfast.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- I. Note the contents of the report and approve the participation of Council staff in the delivery of the scoping study;
- II. Note that funding (£450,000) from Innovate UK was made available to the Connected Places Catapult on 1st December to undertake a scoping study for a Net Zero shipping corridor between Liverpool and Belfast which is expected to start on 1 January and complete by 31st March 2024;

- III. Note that an opportunity to resubmit an earlier application to the Net Zero Living Places Fund and approve the participation of Council staff in the revision and submission of a proposal; and
- IV. A further update will be provided to Members once the scoping study and submission have been completed.

3.0 Main report

Background

3.1 A Statement of Intent was signed between Belfast, Liverpool, Dublin and Manchester in March 2021 to form a cooperative partnership to develop practical approaches to accelerate the delivery of net-zero commitments in our cities and city regions. The Statement commits each city to:

- Sharing best practices, knowledge and experience;
- Connecting organisations and facilitating R&D, business and investment collaborations; and
- Coordinating joint participation at events (including the Net Zero Summit in June 2022) and hosting, where necessary, incoming delegations.

3.2 Subsequent collaboration between the cities has led to the Circular Economy work between Dublin and Belfast funded through the Shared Island Fund and engagement via events in Manchester and Liverpool. Discussions have also been ongoing for some time with the Connected Places Catapult (CPC) and other stakeholders in Liverpool and Belfast around the concept of a Net Zero Shipping Corridor between the two harbour cities.

Funding opportunity 1: Innovate UK

3.3 In mid-November, the CPC was made aware of an opportunity to access funding (£450K) from Innovate UK, if it was able to identify and develop a proposal by 1st December. This provided an opportunity to advance an ongoing discussion on a Net Zero Shipping Corridor between the two cities and to access funds that would enable the scoping of a programme of work to develop this concept into a concrete pipeline of projects. Innovate UK has subsequently approved CPC to use the £450K for the scoping study.

3.4 The key stakeholders include: CPC, Belfast City Council, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, Belfast Harbour, Mersey Maritime, Royal Haskoning DHV, Liverpool University,

Liverpool John Moores University, Queens University,
B9Energy, SIBNI.

- 3.5 It is envisaged that most of the scoping work will be carried out by the Universities but it is likely there will be a small budget (c£10K TBC) available to Belfast City Council to coordinate, engage and support the work. If successful, the project will start on 1st January and run through to 31st March 2024. The Climate team is working at pace with CPC and Queens University to mobilise in advance of the start date in January.

Proposed project: Net Zero Shipping Corridor between Belfast and Liverpool

Project rationale

- 3.6 Ports are key hubs for trade and investment and support SME's and employ thousands of workers. They are also increasingly becoming centres for future fuels and decarbonisation. Shipping currently accounts for 3% of global GHG emissions and is set to increase by 130% by 2050. Belfast (13.1 Million Tonnes) and Liverpool (5.6 Million Tonnes) rank as the first and fourth UK ports by domestic tonnage in 2021.
- 3.7 Belfast Harbour aims to be one of the greenest ports in the world and has set a Net Zero target of 2030. A local consortium has been developing zero-emission shore-side electricity and hydrogen-powered vessels (including a commuter ferry from Bangor to Belfast) and there are many other ongoing developments in this area.
- 3.8 This is an exciting opportunity to connect two important maritime economies and drive decarbonisation, growth and innovation. The project would be a collaboration of businesses, government and academia in the 2 harbour cities.
- 3.9 Decarbonising maritime transportation will require research, development, demonstration, and deployment of scalable zero-emission energy sources at a massive scale. It will also require enabling policies that incentivise the transition to zero-emission fuels and technologies as soon as possible, which in turn can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It also requires green skills.
- 3.10 Net Zero shipping corridors, which showcase zero-emission fuels and technologies along maritime trade routes between two (or more) ports, can encourage the early and rapid adoption of alternatives to petroleum-based fuels in the maritime industry.

The opportunity

- 3.11 Through leveraging the work already being done, the existing assets in Liverpool and Belfast, and the significance of their existing domestic shipping networks, there is a unique opportunity to create a broad feasibility study which could lead to the trialling of green maritime shipping solutions within well used domestic ports, which once trialled would offer a blueprint for decarbonising a significant portion of UK's domestic shipping and establish the United Kingdom as a global leader within this space.

Aims and objectives

- 3.12 The project would be a collaboration between the City Councils and Port Authorities, Industry and academia from Belfast and Liverpool to develop a feasibility study in the two harbour cities. The aims of the project would be to:
- Mitigate transition risk for the two ports as the global economy decarbonises ensuring that the ports of Liverpool and Belfast serve as gateway to trade and investment in decarbonisation technologies (wind, green hydrogen, tidal etc); and
 - Position Liverpool and Belfast at the forefront of net zero innovation and as testbeds for commercialising new approaches and technologies.
- 3.13 The Study will explore Place Leadership and support, identify existing projects and funding proposals, the regulatory basis, the existing green infrastructure and interventions necessary for an implementable Net Zero shipping' corridor between the two regions, and set out the steps necessary to deploy and deliver on a pilot demonstrating the technologies. The outputs would create a collaboration that could lead to a potential larger programme of activity.

Funding opportunity 2: Innovate UK - Net Zero Living Places fund

- 3.14 In October, Belfast City Council submitted two bids to Innovate UK under the Net Zero Living Places fund which were both unsuccessful. Innovate UK have since been in touch to say that they are re-opening the competition for unsuccessful bidders to re-submit to the 'Pathfinder' fund between 22-31st Jan. This opportunity was previously included a paper to the Climate and City Resilience Committee in Aug 2023.

- 3.15 The project ‘Belfast Net Zero pathfinder’ will support Belfast City Council to develop priority interventions (specifically heat and renewable power generation) recommended by the Belfast Local Energy Plan and the Queens Island Decarbonisation Plan into delivery projects. This project will address market barriers through business model innovation and assessing commercial viability and routes to finance to de-risk the implementation process. The aim is to create a better understanding of how Belfast City Council can act as an enabler for delivery of net zero projects in the city.
- 3.16 If successful, the fund will provide total grant funding of up to £150,000. A funding decision is due on 18th Feb with a potential start date on 1st May or 1st June.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.17 There are no financial implications as the scoping study will be funded using the Innovate UK funding and delivered by CPC with inputs from the partner organisations.

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

- 3.18 None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Building Regulation fees for
applications including insulation**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 26 June 2023, it had agreed to continue to waive Building Regulation inspection fees for those applications involving installation of insulation which were not part of funded schemes or maintenance contracts for a further 6 months, through to 30 November 2023.

The waiving of fees was carried out from the date of Council ratification on 1 December 2022 until 30 November 2023, subject to review.

From 1 December 2022 until 30 November 2023, the Building Control Service had analysed a series of reports. The analysis identified 1,498 building regulation applications that were received for the installation of loft insulation. Overall, the majority of applications were made through schemes, with 98 applicants potentially being eligible for a refund under this initiative. 95 of those were identified in the first 6-month period, with only 3 further potentially eligible applicants identified in the six month extension period. A covering letter and a declaration form were issued to each potentially eligible applicant.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

To date, out of the 98 letters and declaration forms issued, 12 declaration forms were returned. Through further investigation none of those applicants were due a refund, as the work had either been carried out as part of a government funded scheme or, once the notional cost of work for insulation (£400) was deducted from the estimate cost of works, the Building Regulation fee still applied for other works that had been carried out. The applicants were informed in writing.

Using this method of analysis and process to identify and contact any applicants who may have paid the fees outside of a scheme has therefore resulted in no refunds being issued to any applicant.

Accordingly, the Committee was asked to determine if:

1. the exercise should continue beyond 30 November 2023; or
2. the exercise should cease, on the basis of the lack of benefit to applicants being achieved as outlined in the report.

The Committee agreed to adopt option 2.

Lagan Valley Regional Park

The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of the People and Communities Committee held on 8 August 2023, it was agreed that the Council would write to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) to express its concern at the withdrawal of core funding for Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) for the 2023/24 financial year.

At the November 2023 meeting of the People and Communities Committee, Members were advised that a response from DfI had been received, which advised that, whilst the Department understood that the withdrawal of the discretionary funding of £42,000 for Lagan Valley Regional Park had left the park in a precarious situation, the decision to cut all discretionary spending and therefore the funding to LVRP had been taken at Departmental level due to overall budget cuts that had affected all Departments, and that the Department would not be able to enter into a new Operational Service Agreement with LVRP. Accordingly, that Committee had agreed to recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that additional funding of £21,000 be awarded to LVRP from reserves and to write to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) asking it to contribute the same amount to address the shortfall in funding from DfI.

The Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 24 November 2023, subsequently agreed to allocate £21,000 to the Lagan Valley Regional Park on condition that it be matched by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and agreed that a review be undertaken of future funding requirements.

Following issue of a letter to Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council requesting formal consideration of this request, a response was received which advised that LCCC was also having to consider several budget cuts from Central Government and their impact at a local level. In its response, LCCC had highlighted that this and other similar requests

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

had been discussed at Council and Member workshops and would be considered in the round to ensure Members were fully informed before taking any decisions with a financial impact.

Officers had met with LCCC representatives to discuss future funding requirements and would continue to engage with LCCC going forward. Members would be kept updated on any decision by LCCC in relation to the request for match funding.

Following discussion, the Committee:

- 1) Noted the response received from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) in relation to providing match funding for Lagan Valley Regional Park:
- 2) Agreed to provide £21,000 of the £42,000 of the discretionary funding which had been withdrawn by the Department of Infrastructure, with a caveat that the Council would not be responsible for the remainder of the shortfall; and
- 3) Agreed to write again to LCCC asking that it contribute the remaining £21,000.

Council's Powers of Vesting - Tribeca

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:

- **Provide members with an outline of the powers of vesting available to the Council in respect of the Tribeca site.**
- **Agree to officers carrying out further work in relation to the possibility of vesting and /or acquisition of the site by agreement including seeking a valuation of the site.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Members of the Committee are asked to:

- **Note the contents of the report.**
- **Agree to officers carrying out further work in relation to the possibility of vesting and/or acquisition of the Tribeca site by agreement, including seeking a valuation of the site; consideration of potential funding sources and planning considerations.**

3.0 Main report

Background

- 3.1** At its meeting on 29th September 2023, the Committee agreed that a report on the possible options for the vesting of the Tribeca site be submitted to a future meeting.
- 3.2** The Tribeca site was formerly known as Royal Exchange, which was initially granted planning permission in October 2012 (Z/2010/1532/F).
- 3.3** This permission was a retail led proposal that allowed the demolition, redevelopment and part change of use of existing buildings to create mixed use development comprising retail, offices, café/bar use, 2no. retail pavilions, 205 apartments including 6 no. live/work units, with associated energy centre, service areas and above ground car parking, cultural/arts centre, hotel, 2-level basement car park and associated access and circulation, creation of new streets and public spaces, reconfiguration of Writers Square, public realm works, landscaping and associated site and road works. It also included works to restore, alter and extend listed buildings and facades and partial demolition of North Street Arcade retaining its facades, partial reconstruction of end blocks and reconstruction of rotunda on original location.
- 3.4** Whilst this permission was commenced through the discharge of conditions and some demolition work, none of the redevelopment has taken place. However, the works which have been undertaken had the effect of commencing the 2010 permission. Generally, this means that the permission remains extant in perpetuity.
- 3.5** In 2017 an outline application (LA04/2017/2341/O) was received from the owners of the site for the demolition of a number of buildings and the redevelopment of the area to create a mixed use development comprising retail, offices, café/restaurant uses, residential apartments, including private rented sector units, hotel use, community uses, car parking, associated access, servicing and circulation arrangements, an energy centre, the creation of new streets, the reconfiguration of Writers Square, public realm works, landscaping and associated site and road works. The application also proposed works to alter listed buildings, restoration of retained listed buildings and facades, and partial demolition of North Street Arcade, retaining its facades. This application was granted in November 2020.

- 3.6 Since the grant of the 2020 permission, the developer has not begun construction of the development. Whilst the developer has ownership of the vast majority of the lands within the overall site, they have had some difficulty securing certain portions of the overall lands required to develop out the scheme as per the existing planning approval. Whilst they have suggested potential variation of the permission to deal with those issues no such application has been received. A report was brought to SPR Committee on 26th June 2023 seeking approval to Council using its vesting powers to secure one of properties within the site. However Members had agreed to defer consideration of the report until such time as the motion tabled at Standards and Business Committee on 27th June 2023, inviting Castlebrooke Investments and/or any of its subsidiaries or related companies which had an interest in or was responsible for the development of the Cathedral Quarter to attend a future Committee meeting to present their plans and provide an update on their work being undertaken to date to develop the area. Castlebrooke subsequently advised Council Officers they intend on meeting with Party Group Leaders to address this motion but to date no meetings have taken place.
- 3.7 At SPR Committee on 22nd September 2023, Members agreed that a report on the possible options for the vesting of the Tribeca site be submitted to a future meeting.

Key Issues – Vesting / Compulsory Purchase

- 3.8 Belfast City Council's power to vest land (or to acquire land without agreement, also known as compulsory purchase) is set out in Section 97(1) of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) Act 1972 ('the 1972 Act'), which states:

'Where a council desires to acquire land otherwise than by agreement for any purpose for which it is authorised by a transferred provision so to acquire land, it may apply to the Ministry concerned for an order (in this Act referred to as a 'vesting order') vesting the land in the council, and that Ministry may make a vesting order' the Council can seek to vest land where it has legislative authority to do so. It is also generally only permitted where it has provided impossible or difficult to acquire the land by negotiated agreement. The general statutory intention behind a Vesting Order is that there is an intention to implement a scheme which requires the vesting to take place. As previously advised in the report to SP&R on 23/6/23 the Council can only vest land where a specific power is given to vest by another legislative provision. The Council must apply for the Vesting Order to the

Department that has oversight of the particular function the Council is relying on to apply for the Order.

- 3.9** There are a number of legislative provisions which allow the Council to seek to vest land, including where it wants to do so to provide recreational and cultural activities or for providing tourist amenities. However the most relevant power rests in the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 which confers on the Council the power to vest land for the purpose of the economic development of its district.
- 3.10** Prior to asking the relevant Department to seek a Vesting Order, the Council must be clear on a number of factors:
- 1.** The purpose for which the scheme is required. This involves carrying out extensive consideration of the proposal in detail. From which, the Council can make decision on the most suitable vesting power to use.
 - 2.** Explain why vesting is necessary and the outcomes which the vesting will achieve.
 - 3.** The further costs in financing of the redevelopment, the investment which may be required and whether it will be entirely public funded together with an overarching assessment of the viability of the scheme as a whole.
 - 4.** The use of a Vesting Order is generally to be considered, only where it has proved impossible or difficult to acquire the land by negotiated agreement.
- 3.11** The process of obtaining a Vesting Order in respect of the site will be complex and require a significant officer resource to satisfy the various steps set out within the 1972 Order, not least of which is securing the approval of the relevant Department, that being the Department of Communities.
- 3.12** The timescale on making a Vesting Order depends greatly on the nature of the site, whether an owner(s) is identified, and how willing the owner is at negotiating sale by agreement to the Council. The Council would also need to be clear about what it is proposing to do with the vested land which would require a considerable amount of work in advance of applying to a sponsoring Department.
- 3.13** If the Department agrees to make a Vesting Order, they must publish their intention to do so and if it receives any objections, it can cause a local enquiry to be held at which the

Council and any objector shall have the opportunity to make representations.

Financial Implications of vesting

- 3.14 If the Vesting Order is granted, the Council must pay compensation to the landowner whose lands have been vested. The level of compensation and valuation of the site will be complex given its size and the particular circumstances. If no agreement on the amount of compensation can be reached, the valuation can be referred to the Lands Tribunal, who shall determine the level of compensation payable after hearing arguments on same from the Council and the Landowner.
- 3.15 At this time, officers cannot advise members as to the potential amount of compensation which may be payable. Generally this only becomes clear after the Vesting Order is made but it may be possible, and based on currently available information, to obtain a 'high-level' valuation of the site to include other heads of claim arising from a Vesting Order.
- 3.16 Committee is also asked to note that in addition to compensation to the landowner, Council would also be liable for other associated costs in terms of claimant's legal and professional fees together with other costs not usually considered with purchase by agreement such as disturbance payments, business loss/extinguishment, cost of any public enquiry as a result of a challenge etc.

Finance and Resource Implications

- 3.17 There are none associated with this report although Committee should note that there are likely to be significant finance and resource implications if Council wishes to pursue vesting.

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

- 3.18 None at this time."

The Committee:

- 1) Noted the contents of the report;
- 2) Agreed to write to the developer and funder to express the Council's concerns regarding the lack of progress in delivering the scheme and advising that the Council will consider all options for acquiring the site, including the possibility of vesting; and

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

- 3) Agreed to officers carrying out further work in relation to the possibility of vesting and/or acquisition of the Tribeca site by agreement, including seeking a valuation of the site; consideration of potential funding sources and potential third-party arrangements that might facilitate progression of the scheme.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme Update

The Director of Property and Projects advised the Members that the Council's Physical Programme currently included over 400 capital projects via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivered on behalf of external agencies. The Council's Capital Programme formed part of the Physical Programme and was a rolling programme of investment which either improved existing Council facilities or provided new facilities. She advised that this report included an update on the CCTV upgrade and lighting at Henry Jones Playing Fields and approval for a visit to the Foundry in Dublin for members of the Installations – City Hall/City Hall Grounds Working Group.

Henry Jones Playing Fields works

The Members were reminded that in September 2023 the Committee had approved an upgrade to the current CCTV system and the installation of lighting in the car park at the Henry Jones Playing Fields, subject to realignment of spend. The Committee had agreed also to defer consideration of the installation of perimeter fencing to enable further discussions to be held with the key user groups.

The CCTV upgrade and car park lighting works were being taken forward via the Property and Projects Department. Design work was underway and procurement was scheduled to take place within the coming weeks. Both elements of the project were due for completion in Spring 2024.

Statues – City Hall Grounds

The Members were also reminded that the installation of two new statues in City Hall Grounds of Mary Ann McCracken and Winifred Carney had been agreed. The proposed unveiling of both statues was due to take place on Friday 8th March 2024, which was International Women's Day. There was likely to be significant media attention for this and further detail on the proposed programme would be brought to the Committee next month. The statues were currently in the foundry in Dublin for casting and approval was sought for the Chairperson and members of the Installations – City Hall/City Hall Grounds Working Group to visit the Foundry to view both pieces and meet with the artist Ralf Sander.

The Committee noted the update provided on the Henry Jones Playing Fields works and approved a visit to the Foundry in Dublin for Members of the Installations – City Hall/City Hall Grounds Working Group in order to view the statues of Winifred Carney and Mary Anne McCracken prior to their unveiling in the grounds on International Women's Day on Friday 8th March.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

Asset Management

The Committee:

i) Belfast Castle – Lease Renewal

- approved the renewal of a Lease with Arc 21 for office accommodation at Belfast Castle in the sum of £24,500 per annum on a Lease for 5 years, with a break option for both parties at the end of year two and then annually year after.

ii) Ormeau Park – NI Water Storm Drain

- approved a NI Water Storm Drain at Ormeau Park.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts

The Committee:

- Approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Table 1 below;
- Approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Table 2 below; and
- Approved the modification of the contracts as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Table 3 below, subject to the omission of the Procurement of Public Bike Share Scheme. LOT 1: Design, supply, maintenance and operation of the scheme which is deferred to enable further information to be provided to the next meeting of the Committee.

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Medical referee services	Up to 5 years	£150,000	D Sales	Legal obligation to appoint a medical referee to sign cremation forms
A grants management system providing online application and management of grants streams	Up to 4 Years	£131,540	P Gribben	To ensure ongoing provision of a grants management system

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason Code
Visit Belfast marketing throughout 2024 including; UNESCO city of music, Belfast 24 and city events	Up to 12 months	£370,000	J Greer	There is currently a formalised agreement with Visit Belfast to act as our Out of State marketing partner. No other provider can deliver this additional requirement.	Visit Belfast	3
Provision of Clockwise System	Up to 1 year	£62,122	P Gribben	Continued use of current system required until replacement of system is implemented. (In progress under the HR/Payroll/T&A Project).	Softworks Limited	3
Provision and installation of a system for side of vehicle advertising on Refuse Collection Vehicles	Up to 2 years	£80,000	D Sales	The proposed system will ensure that any advertising can be easily changed with no damage to the vehicle to reflect any changes to the campaign message or future campaigns. There were no bids received from a recent tender	Roadvert Ltd (Spedian Vehicle Graphic Solutions)	1

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

				competition. Supplier has provided a similar service/system for BCC previously.		
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Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Current Contract Duration	Modification required	SRO	Description	Supplier
T2123 - Provision of an External Mail Collection Service	Up to 3 years	Additional 3 months	P Gribben	Additional time is required to finalise the Specification and associated tender documents. Work is underway to complete this review and to advertise the tender but additional time of up to 3-months is required to ensure continuity of service whilst tender process is completed.	Postal Sort
Procurement of Public Bike Share Scheme. LOT 1: Design supply maintenance & operation of the scheme	Up to 9 years	Additional 9 months and £391,000	J Greer	The contract with the current operator needs to be extended for additional services that have become necessary due to the requirement for a longer transition period that was not foreseen at the outset of the contract. This is needed due to technological	NSL Service Group

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

				<p>advances and improvements to equipment in the bike share industry over the past 9 years that doesn't allow for a prompt change of operator without having a detrimental impact on the service.</p>	
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STA/ Direct Award Reasons

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

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

Equality and Good Relations

**Minutes of Shared City Partnership
Meeting 8th January**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 8th January 2024, including:

Shared City Partnership Membership (Verbal Update)

- That members note the verbal update and agree the approach provided by the Good Relations Manager.

Good Relations Quarter 3 Report

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

PEACEPLUS – Theme 1.1 - Local Action Plan Update

- The Partnership recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that it note 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 11th January.

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations in respect of those applications received up to 5th January, as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
2024 EVENTS						
Belfast YMCA	20 March 2024	Youth in Government Graduation reception for 17/ 18-year-olds that participated in this programme run by YMCA.	D	No charge as charity	Yes, Tea and coffee reception.	Approve No Charge Tea and coffee Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer.</i>

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
		Numbers attending 70				
Ramadan Tent Project Ltd <i>(based in London but working with local community groups)</i>	7 April 2024	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 and activities on 2024 theme of Heritage. Numbers attending 250 – 500	B & D	No charge as charity	Yes, Soft drinks reception.	Approve No Charge Soft Drink Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer.</i>
BTC - Belfast Tamil Community	13 or 14 April 2024	BTC Tamil New Year "Puthandu," is a significant cultural and traditional celebration observed by the Tamil community worldwide. This celebration is an evening of food and entertainment. Numbers attending 300	C & D	No charge as community group	Yes, Soft drinks reception.	Approve No Charge Soft Drink Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer.</i>

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED	CIVIC HQ RECOMMEND
Image Nation NI	1 November 2024	Belfast Diwali Celebrations – an evening of food and entertainment to celebrate one of the biggest celebrations in Hindu Calendar. Numbers attending – 350	C	No charge as voluntary group	Yes, Soft drinks reception.	Approve No Charge Soft Drink Reception <i>£500 given to their chosen caterer.</i>
Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	28 November 2024	Belfast Trust Chairman's Awards 2024 – Awards ceremony to recognise the contributions and achievements of the staff in the Belfast Trust. Numbers attending – 300	C	Charge £825	No hospitality	Approve Charge £825 No hospitality

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services reported that, subsequent to the report have been issued, a late application for the use of a function room in the City Hall for Helpline Awareness Day on 20th March, 2024 had been received and she recommended that the Committee agree to the request.

The Committee adopted the recommendation.

National Famine Memorial Day 2024

The Committee was reminded that, following a Motion adopted at the Standards and Business Committee on 26th September 2023, the Council had written to the Minister at the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media on 8th November 2023 to make a request for Belfast to host the National Famine Memorial Day in May 2024.

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services reported that, on 21st December 2023, the Chief Executive of Belfast City Council had received a response from the Department stating that it had a policy of rotating the province that the commemoration was held in each year, and that last year the commemoration was held in Milford, County Donegal. The letter further stated that the Department was currently in the process of identifying a host county from Leinster for the 2024 event. Therefore, it would not be inviting applications from Ulster this year.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

The letter concluded by stating that, as the Commemoration would be due to take place in Ulster again in number of years, the Department would keep Belfast City Council's expression of interest on file for consideration.

The Committee noted the Irish Government's response to the Council's request to host the National Famine Memorial Day in May, 2024.

Coronation Gift

The Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services advised the Committee that His Majesty's Lord Lieutenant for the County Borough of Belfast had offered the gift of a tree to the City of Belfast to mark the occasion of the coronation of King Charles and Queen Camilla. Following discussion at Party Group Leaders, potential locations for the gift were explored in the City Hall grounds. As part of this work, the advice of the Council's Senior Woodland and Recreation Officer was sought.

The City Hall grounds are surrounded by a variety of mature tree species such as lime, sycamore, and several smaller maples. On undertaking a scoping exercise, a viable site, which could accommodate a single tree would be to the rear of the cenotaph at Donegall Square/Donagall Square West.

Furthermore, the Senior Woodland and Recreation Officer had recommended that a *Tilia cordata* Greenspire (small leaf lime) was planted, as it was a variety of tree which would be in keeping with the mature lime trees which have been growing within the City Hall grounds for many years and would maintain continuity. This species of tree would also be appropriate given that the grounds of City Hall were a designated conservation area.

The Lord Lieutenant had indicated that, should the Committee be content, the planting of the tree would proceed by the end of February 2024, in keeping with the tree planting season.

The Committee agreed to accept the offer of a tree and approved the location recommended in the grounds of City Hall.

Portrait of King Charles III

The Committee was advised that the UK government, through the Cabinet Office, had recently introduced a scheme to allow public authorities across the UK to apply for a free, framed portrait of His Majesty King Charles III.

Public Authorities that fell within certain defined groupings were eligible for this portrait at no cost and Belfast City Council had received communication advising of the process to request a portrait on this basis as a principal local authority.

The Committee agree to accept the offer of a free, framed portrait of His Majesty King Charles III.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 19th January, 2024**

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

**Request for BCC to act as a Sponsor for a
Community Asset Transfer for West Belfast
Partnership Board - Councillor Black to raise**

The Committee agreed to accede to the request for the Council to act as a sponsor for a community asset transfer for the West Belfast Partnership Board and noted that there would be no costs associated with the request.

Chairperson

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Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 26th January, 2024

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOТЕLY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director of
Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. J. Tully, Strategic Director of City and Organisational
Strategy;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director Place and Economy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were received.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Restricted Items

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

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

**Special Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 26th January, 2024**

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 and District Rate 2024/25

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 19th January, it has agreed the cash limit for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2024/25 and the recommended cash limits for the People and Communities, City Growth and Regeneration and the Planning Committees, subject to consultation with the other Committees prior to the special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee on 26th January.

He reported that those Committee had now met and agreed their cash limits. Accordingly, he submitted a report in this regard, together with recommendations on the district rate for 2024/25.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report on the Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2024/25 to afford officers the opportunity to attempt to address those issues raised in respect of the pay and grading review.

It was agreed also that a special meeting of the Council be held to consider the setting of the district rate.

Extended Cultural Support Programme

The Members were reminded that, during discussion at the January meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, officers were asked to consider support for groups that have been underrepresented within Belfast City Council's historic funding programmes. This was also discussed at the January meeting of the City, Growth and Regeneration Committee.

Accordingly, the Director of Economic Development submitted a report seeking approval to progress with an extended cultural support programme to provide co-design support for groups requiring additional assistance to overcome barriers to accessing funding and to agree additional investment to support Belfast's bid for Fleadh Cheoil.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report to enable a further report on the full Belfast 2024 Programme to be presented to the special meeting of the Committee agreed earlier in the meeting.

Pay and Grading Review

Pursuant to its decision of 19th January, the Committee considered a further report on details of the proposed new Pay and Grading structure for NJC staff on Belfast City Council Terms and Conditions and seeking the Committee's approval to note the next steps within the Industrial Relations Framework.

The Committee:

**Special Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
Friday, 26th January, 2024**

- Noted the next steps to assess the equality impact of various proposals for a non-consolidated payment;
- Noted the proposed next steps to bring a preferred option back to the Committee for approval;
- Noted that following a decision of the strategic Policy and Resources Committee a formal offer will be issued to Trades Unions for the agreed pay and grading model;
- Noted that the costs for the new pay and grading model have been included in the rate setting process for Financial Year 2024/25;
- Noted that the cost for an updated non-consolidated payment for 2023/24 are not yet finalised and will be offset by either in-year underspends and/or realignment of specified reserves; and
- Noted the proposed next phase of the Pay and Grading Review.

Chairperson

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People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 9th January, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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

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

Apologies

An apology was reported from Councillor Verner.

Minutes

The Committee was asked to note that the minutes of the meeting of the Committee of 5th December had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th January, subject to the amendment under the heading Proposal for Dual Language Street Signs, the Council agreed that the minute be amended to reflect that a Dual Language Street sign would be erected at Knock Eden Park and that a resurvey of the street would not be carried out.

The minutes of the meeting of 5th December were taken as read and signed as correct, subject to the amendment.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Canavan and M. Donnelly declared an interest in Agenda Item 3 (a) Correspondence from Belfast Advice Group in that they were associated with an organisation which was in receipt of funding and left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Item Withdrawn from Agenda

The Committee noted that agenda item 5 (a) Article 4 and 5 of Waste and Contamination Land (NI) Order had been withdrawn from the agenda.

Presentation

Presentation from A Playful City

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 9th January, 2024**

on its initiative Playful Streets

The Chairperson welcomed to Mr. A. Copeland and Ms. N. Ni Bhriain, representing A Playful City, to the meeting.

Mr. Copeland commenced by advising that A Playful City was a not-for-profit organisation focused on engaging communities to create more inclusive, healthy and playful public places. He stated that its aim was to focus on facilitating as many voices as possible through a phased process to design public space for local community. He highlighted that, as recently as one or two generations ago, it was part of the fabric of urban neighbourhoods to be playing in the street but, as dangers had increased, recent research demonstrated that a child's 'radius of activity' was usually quite close to parents or caregivers until the child was in the region of 9 years of age.

The representative advised that a Playful Street was a resident-led, low cost and easy way to create play spaces close to home by reducing or removing traffic temporarily. It was about opening streets for children to play out on their streets, whilst also giving the opportunity for neighbours to get to know each other through meeting on their streets. Its aim was to create a safe space for children to play outside their homes and for that community to come together.

The representative advised the Members that, in order to normalise street play for children, local authorities and public bodies needed to further explore how they could provide support to communities who wished to run Playful Streets and he specifically drew reference to the pilot run by Fingal County Council and the learning that could be taken from this pilot.

The representative concluded the presentation by sharing a drone shot of the Fingal pilot and also a video animation of the Playful Street Report, a copy of which was subsequently e-mailed to all Members of the Committee. More information on A Playful City was available via its website [here](#)

Several of the Members welcomed the informative presentation and stated that they would be keen to hear more about the Fingal pilot. It was acknowledged that Belfast City Council's situation was slightly different to Fingal County Council's in that Belfast did not have the powers to close streets as this was the responsibility of the Department for Infrastructure, however, Members were keen to explore the learning that could be taken from it and requested that Sustrans also be invited to attend.

The Committee noted the presentation and agreed to invite representatives from Fingal County Council and Sustrans to a future meeting to further explore the Playful City Street Initiative and to hear more about its pilot scheme.

Restricted Items

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

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 9th January, 2024**

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

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

Correspondence from Belfast Advice Group

The Committee considered a report which detailed that correspondence had been received from the Belfast Advice Group (BAG) seeking additional funding for generalist advice along with several other requests.

It was noted that officers would be undertaking a review of the funding request with a view to obtaining a more detailed breakdown.

The Committee agreed that it would be useful for BAG to attend the February meeting of Committee to provide an overview of its work and to consider further the request.

Crescent Park Gates

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 15th January 2023, the Members had heard deputations from representatives of the Friends of The Crescent (FoTC) and a delegation from those opposing the proposal to gate the park. At this stage, the Committee had agreed to defer the decision to enable wider consultation to be undertaken with the various stakeholders.

The Members were advised that, following the last meeting, Council officers had met with the FoTC and a group called the Crescent Park Preservation Collective (CPPC). The Council had also liaised with the PSNI and sought its views on the proposal. The Neighbourhood Services Manager then drew the Members’ attention to written submissions that had been received from each of the stakeholders which had been attached as appendices to the report.

The Committee was advised that a late request had been made by representatives from the CPPC seeking to address tonight’s meeting of the Committee to outline their opposition to the gating of the park. The Members declined to accede to the request, given that representations had already been made to the Committee in January 2023 and that the group, like the other stakeholders, had submitted a written submission which clearly outlined their position.

The Members were also informed of correspondence received earlier in the day in relation to a possible public right of way through this public space. The Members were informed that should they decide to agree the gating proposal that it would be subject to this matter being resolved.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 9th January, 2024**

The Committee noted the estimated financial cost to the Council for the erection of the gates would be in the region of £60,000 and that the FoTC were willing to contribute £25,000 to the total costs of design, production and installation. The Council would be required to contribute to the remainder of the installation costs, agree to adopt and maintain the gates and add the daily opening and closing of the gates to their existing schedule for other parks and open spaces in the same Council area.

Following consideration of the report it was:

Moved by Councillor Murray,
Seconded by Councillor McAteer,

That given the amount of work undertaken to try and revitalise the area, the Committee agrees to proceed with the erection of gates at Crescent Park.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

That the Committee agrees not to erect the gates at Crescent Park but instead to redirect the Council element of funding to animate and revitalise the area to help tackle the anti-social behaviour issues.

On a vote, 3 Members voted for the amendment and 15 against and it was declared lost.

The Committee then voted on the original proposal, in the name of Councillor Murray, to proceed with the erection gates at Crescent Park

On a vote, 15 Members voted for the amendment and 3 against and it was declared carried.

The Committee further agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting that would detail the position in relation to the 24-hour pilot schemes previously agreed by Committee to be undertaken at Ormeau, Falls and Woodvale Parks.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Community Support Plan and Review of Funding

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The main purpose of this report is;

- To seek approval for officers to produce a Council Community Support Plan (25/28) and commission external support to complete this.
- To seek approval for a review of the current community development large grants schemes and commission external support to complete this.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to:

- Approve that officers produce a Council Community Support Plan (25/28) and commission necessary external support to complete this.
- Approve that officers undertake a review of current community development large grants schemes and commission necessary external support to complete this.

3..0 Main Report

Background information

Community Support Plan

- 3.1** Members will recall that Council provides a range of community development grants and funding to support the community/voluntary sector across the city. This funding comes directly from Council and Department for Communities (DfC) via the Community Support Programme (CSP) which is provided to all council areas. This year, the CSP is contributing over £2.2m towards Advice Funding, Capacity Building, Revenue for Community Buildings, Social Supermarket and Summer Scheme funding programmes.
- 3.2** The CSP Letter of Offer includes a requirement for Council to provide DfC with a 3-Year Community Support Plan. This plan sets out how we promote community development and support service provision within communities. The plan must be aligned with the CSP outcomes and our Community Plan, the Belfast Agenda.
- 3.3** Council's last Community Support Plan was completed in 2014. Since the introduction of community planning, Council has used the Belfast Agenda to articulate its priorities and commitments in terms of community support and this approach has been followed by most other council areas. However, there are a number of factors which provide the rationale for developing a current Community Support Plan which further articulates detail on Council's priorities in terms of community support.

3.4 These factors include;

- Publication of refreshed Belfast Agenda which contains a number of high level commitments in relation Community and Neighbourhood Regeneration, Health Inequalities, Children and Young People and Older People.
- Impacts of both Covid and Cost of Living pressures which need to be considered and reflected in a detailed Community Support Plan.
- Need to review and articulate Council's position in terms of its community support priorities as these will inform resources required, including funding priorities and approaches.
- Ongoing DfC reviews of People and Place (Neighbourhood Renewal), Support for Community/Voluntary sector and Advice Services which are scheduled for implementation in 2025. It is likely that these will have a significant impact on the funding environment within Belfast and Council needs to consider its priorities in advance, so that it can respond to these changes and any requests for support that may emerge.

3.5 Review of Capacity Building and Revenue Grants

Council provides funding to support the development of the community/voluntary sector in Belfast. The two large multi annual grants which support this activity are capacity and revenue (for community buildings).The objectives/outcomes and operation of these grants have not been reviewed since 2012 but recent analysis of grant applications shows a change in the types of organisations and activity which are seeking support. For example, applications would historically have come from neighbourhood/area-based community organisations but in 2023, more applications were received from organisations supporting specific 'communities of interest' and there was an increase in the level of support requested for running costs within capacity applications. In addition, as outlined in 3.4, DfC are undertaking a number of reviews on relevant funding programmes that will have an impact for the VCSE sector in Belfast. It is therefore timely that council undertake a review of our programmes to ensure that we are funding activity that meets priorities and outcomes that we want to support.

3.6 The current large grant programmes are supporting activity from April 23 – March 26. Council provided a significant increase in funding for these programmes in 2023. The total level of funding for both grants is £3,230,609 per annum, with £734,357 coming from the CSP and £2,496,252 from Council. A review would enable

council to consider the outcomes which Council want to achieve through the level of investment it makes .

3.7 The next round of applications to the large grant programme will open in June 2025 and an extensive review needs to be completed in advance of this date to ensure adequate time is scheduled for the extensive consultation/engagement process and equality screening that will be required.

3.8 Officers are seeking approval to undertake both pieces of work as soon as possible so that final reports and associated actions can be agreed through Council before March 2025.

3.9 **Financial and Resource Implications**

Staff and financial resource to complete this work will be taken from existing budgets. In order to ensure an objective, independent exercise is undertaken, external consultant/s will be appointed to work with council officers to produce the reports.

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

Given the significant impact which any changes to the large grant funding programme will have on the VCSE sector and communities across the city, an equality screening and rural impact assessment will be undertaken on any resulting change in policy/programme.”

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

Schools Air Quality Monitoring

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

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

1.1 The Committee will be aware that the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 contains an action proposed by Sustrans and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in respect of ‘School Streets’. A ‘School Street’ is a road or street outside of a school where a temporary restriction on motorised traffic is applied at am ‘drop-off’ and pm ‘pick-up’ times during the school day.

1.2 Ambient air quality monitoring in the vicinity of schools for typical road transport related pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and particulate matter (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) may provide health-based evidence and numerical data to help inform the identification and designation of School Streets by the Department for Infrastructure and Sustrans. Sustrans have indicated that gathering data from air

quality monitors could help make the case stronger for where we need to tackle air pollution and target schools for interventions such as a School Streets pilot.

1.3 Accordingly, this report serves to provide a monitoring proposal for a range of Belfast primary schools in order to characterise local transport related ambient air pollution affecting school users. The monitoring data will be provided to DfI, Sustrans and where requested to the respective schools to help inform the identification and designation of School Streets.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is invited to note the contents of this School's Streets' Air Quality Monitoring Report and to agree that the council's ambient monitoring contribution to the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 School Streets project be implemented in the manner proposed.

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The Committee will be aware that the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 contains an action at measure 22, traffic management, proposed by Sustrans and the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in respect of 'School Streets'. A School Street is a road or street outside of a school where a temporary restriction on motorised traffic is applied at am 'drop-off' and pm 'pick-up' times during the school day, resulting in a safer and environmentally improved local environment. The restriction is typically applied to both school and through traffic.

3.2 By way of example, it is noted that DfI, at the Ravenhill Road, in addition to having designated the Ravenhill Road as an urban clearway from 08:00 – 09:30 and 16:30 – 18:00 (Monday to Friday), have imposed a 20 mph signalised speed limit around a school entrance and have posted signs restricting stopping on the school's entrance markings from 08:30 – 09:15 and from 14:30 – 15:30 (Monday to Friday) in order to improve safety and the local environment.

3.3 Moreover, the Committee is advised that a 'Notice of Motion' in respect of School Streets was considered at the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee meeting of 20th January 2023, whereupon the Committee agreed, *'in the first instance, that the Council would write to the Department for Infrastructure requesting it to bring forward a School Streets pilot project in Belfast, with the response to be presented to the Committee for consideration and a decision to be taken on the way forward'*.

- 3.4** Furthermore, upon consideration of the minutes of the People and Communities Committee meeting of 13th June 2023 concerning the Air Quality Detailed Assessment report, at the full Council meeting of 3rd July 2023, Council agreed that a letter would be forwarded to the Department for Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs (DAERA) seeking air quality monitoring stations to be erected around primary schools. A letter was sent to the DAERA Air and Environmental Quality Unit on 9th August 2023 by the Director of City and Neighbourhood Services, and a response was received from DAERA, dated 30th August 2023, indicating the Department's intention to support the purchase of two small sensor air quality monitoring units via the 2023-2024 local air quality management process, to be used in a School Streets monitoring project.
- 3.5** The Committee will be aware that the four Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) presently designated across the city have been declared for exceedances of the $40 \mu\text{gm}^{-3}$ nitrogen dioxide annual mean air quality objective, associated principally with road transport emissions. It should be noted however that in accordance with the provisions of the Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) local air quality management guidance (LAQM.TG(22)), annual mean objectives apply only at the building façades of residential properties, schools, hospitals, care homes etc., where members of the public are regularly exposed over a substantial period of the objective. They do not apply at kerbside or other locations where public exposure is short-term. The $200 \mu\text{gm}^{-3}$ 1-hour mean objective for nitrogen dioxide is therefore more correctly applied at kerbside locations and so it is considered that any ambient monitoring for nitrogen dioxide in the vicinity of schools should be on this basis. The Committee will be additionally aware that there is a 'drop off' in nitrogen dioxide concentrations with distance from the kerbside of a road and so the highest nitrogen dioxide concentrations are likely to be experienced by school users at kerbside locations along the most heavily trafficked nearby roads. Particulate matter (PM_{10} and $\text{PM}_{2.5}$) concentrations are assessed against annual mean objectives, with PM_{10} also assessed against a 24-hour mean objective.
- 3.6** The Committee is advised that council Air Quality Officers have liaised with Sustrans in order to identify a selection of primary schools situated throughout the city where transport related ambient air quality monitoring in their localities might be undertaken. Selection criteria applied include; • Is there much traffic congestion at the school gates? • Does the infrastructure / road layout around the school seem suitable for a future intervention such as School Streets? • Is the school keen to increase active travel among pupils? • Is the school in the Active School Travel programme? Some of the primary schools identified

are already engaged with Sustrans through their Active School Travel programme.

- 3.7** Schools under consideration for ambient air quality monitoring in their locality include' St. Joseph's Primary, Holland Drive, Ballyhackamore; Rosetta Primary School, Knockbreda Road; Belvoir Park Primary School, Belvoir Drive; Holy Rosary Primary School, Sunnyside Crescent; Holy Family Primary School, Newington Avenue; Cavehill Primary School, Upper Castle Park; Holy Evangelists' Primary School and Nursery Unit, Glasvey Drive, Dunmurry and; Holy Trinity Primary School, Monagh Drive.
- 3.8** Sustrans have subsequently indicated that as a consequence of their ongoing engagement with some of the abovementioned schools, they would inform them about the Council's plans to potentially locate air quality monitors in their localities. Sustrans have advised that the responses have been positive for those schools that they have been in contact with to date. Council officers will however have full regard for any school concerns expressed regarding the proposed monitoring activities.
- 3.9** There will be no impact on school operations or pupils as a consequence of the proposed ambient air quality monitoring and officers will not need to enter any school grounds, as all ambient monitoring will be planned and undertaken to target adjacent public roads and transport routes, to and from the schools.
- 3.10** It is therefore proposed to purchase two new solar powered small sensor indicative grade ambient air quality monitors for nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter and to deploy them, alongside two of the council's existing Zephyr small sensor air quality monitors, originally located to contribute additional background data for the detailed assessment project, to the School Streets project. An example of an existing Zephyr monitor installation is included in the Appendix (Section 4.0) of this report. It is further proposed that the monitors will be deployed from mid to late January 2024, subject to suitable lamppost / street furniture mounting locations in appropriate monitoring locations being identified and agreed with DfI, which owns the lampposts and street furniture. In addition, the lampposts or street furniture chosen must be able to safely support the small sensor monitors and solar panels throughout all weather conditions and so this will need to be confirmed by DfI. The monitors and solar panels will be marked as council air quality monitoring equipment and be located on lampposts or street furniture at an approximate 3m height. The monitors are virtually silent in operation and data collection and communication is via inbuilt 4G wireless data modem. It is proposed that the monitors will be installed for an approximate period of 3 months until around Easter 2024 in the locality of an initial four schools, subject to school engagement and agreement,

whereupon they may be relocated to the remaining school areas. This approach will mean that ambient monitoring may continue until the conclusion of the Northern Ireland 2023-2024 school academic year on 1st July 2024.

3.11 The small sensor air quality monitors can generate indicative ambient monitoring data over typical 1-minute intervals and so provide suitable temporal data resolution for assessing compliance with annual, daily and hourly mean air quality objectives, as well as identifying and characterising daily diurnal trends such as any am or pm pollution peaks associated with school or road traffic. It is considered that a three-month monitoring duration will provide sufficient data to correctly characterise am or pm pollution peaks. Monitoring will be able to take account of school holidays, etc.

3.12 The transport related ambient monitoring data will be shared with Sustrans and DfI and be made available to the respective schools, upon their request. Where additionally requested, Council Air Quality Officers will engage with Sustrans, DfI and schools in order to assist in interpreting the air quality monitoring data generated, and in support of any subsequent engagement concerning the designation of School Streets.

3.13 **Financial and Resource Implications**

The purchase cost of the two small sensor air quality monitors is being provided at a 100% funding rate by DAERA through the 2023-2024 local air quality management grant process. Any additional funds required for delivery of this monitoring project will be provided from within existing Scientific Unit budget resources. The monitoring project will be delivered by council Air Quality Officers as an addition to their statutory local air quality management obligations.

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

None.”

Following a query regarding the lack of inner-city schools included in the pilot, the Director of City Services advised that the schools had been selected in close liaison with Sustrans.

The Committee:

- noted the content of this School's Streets' Air Quality Monitoring Report and agreed the Council's ambient monitoring contribution to the Belfast City Air Quality Action Plan 2021-2026 School Streets project be implemented in the manner proposed;

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 9th January, 2024**

- agreed to write to DAERA seeking additional funding to enable the extension of the monitoring programme to additional school streets; and
- agreed that, following this pilot, a report would be submitted to a future meeting to establish the parameters for the selection of additional schools should a future pilot be feasible.

Unadopted Alleyways Workshop

The Committee was reminded that, at its November 2023 meeting, it had agreed that a special meeting of the Committee would be convened to consider the vesting of unadopted alleyways. Council officers had since met with the Chairperson and Councillor R. Brooks who had suggested the special meeting and it was now felt that, given the proposed number of outside stakeholders involved, a workshop would be a better, more informal approach at this stage.

The Members were then asked to consider and review the following list of proposed attendees:

- Department for Communities;
- Department for Infrastructure;
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive;
- Radius Housing;
- Choice Housing;
- Department for Justice; and
- Connswater Homes.

The Committee agreed that the proposed special Committee meeting be changed to a Workshop to be held on 26th February and agreed the proposed list of attendees as detailed.

Operational Issues

Request for Community Garden at Lower Botanic

The Committee considered a report which sought approval for the use of part of Lower Botanic Gardens by Friends of the Field for a new agroecology community garden as part of the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project.

The Members were advised that the UPSURGE Project was a Horizon 2020 research collaboration with Queen's University Belfast that involved five cities across Europe aiming to test nature-based solutions for climate action. The aim of the project, which would run until August 2025, was to develop a climate demonstrator site at Lower Botanic Gardens to test different nature-based solutions and support learning on how adaptive practices in the use and management of green spaces could support pollution alleviation, citizen health, and climate resilience. The project would help the Council to deliver on the Belfast Resilience Strategy which aimed to transition the city to an inclusive net-zero emissions, climate resilient economy in a generation.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 9th January, 2024**

As part of the development of the demonstrator project, an agroecology community garden was being developed on site which would test, among other things, how community growing spaces were developed and contribute towards climate action. The Climate Team had been working with a range of stakeholders since 2022 to codesign the spaces and develop relationships with interested groups and organisations. As part of this, Friends of the Field and Friends of Belfast Botanic Gardens were two groups that had been engaging with the Council and helping shape the plans on site.

A request had been received from Friends of the Field to enter into an agreement with Belfast City Council for the establishment of the community garden at Lower Botanic to act as a hub for sustainable practices, innovative garden-based learning, environmental conservation and fostering community engagement.

The Committee was advised that Friends of the Field, as part of the project, would manage a volunteer-run community garden guided by the principles of permaculture and environmental sustainability. The garden would serve as a valuable resource for the community, promoting healthy eating habits, physical activity, and environmental stewardship.

The Members noted that the project aligned with the objectives of the EU funded UPSURGE project and that the community garden would serve three core purposes:

1. Growing, teaching and learning;
2. Enhancing community development and climate resilience; and
3. Improving the environment and biodiversity.

The group had committed to developing the gardens and believed it had the necessary experience in project management, horticulture and fundraising to ensure the garden's operational success.

The Members were advised that the area requested by Friends of the Field was an area of fenced ground to the northern end of the site, encompassing 1,626 m². The group was requesting initially that the agreement would run for one year, with the option to renew. Friends of the Field had been successful in securing funding to run community gardening activities on the site, with the main infrastructure associated with the gardens funded via existing UPSURGE budget.

The Committee approved, in principle, the use of part of Lower Botanic Gardens as an agroecology community garden by Friends of the Field, in conjunction with the Horizon 2020 UPSURGE project. It was noted that this agreement was subject to a further report on the terms of the agreement being submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Hubbub Recycling on the Go Pilot Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 **At it's February 2023 meeting, Committee approved the request from Hububb for Belfast to take part in a trial recycling on-the-go campaign and noted that a report would be taken back to**

committee following the pilot. This report provides members with an update on the pilot.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 Members are asked to note the content of the report and the planned next steps.

3.0 Main Report

Campaign Overview

3.1 BCC worked with environmental charity Hubbub, funded by the Coca-Cola Foundation, to introduce effective recycling on-the-go in Belfast city centre. The campaign introduced 25 new dual litter and recycling bins to the city centre and to four parks in the different areas of the city Falls Park, Victoria Park, Waterworks and the Botanic Gardens. See Appendix one.

3.2 Based on Hubbub's approach to recycling on-the-go the campaign focused on making the bins easier and simpler to use and collecting plastic bottles and cans as the primary target materials. The bins have just two options, one for litter and one for plastic bottles and cans. This is in contrast to the previous bins, which had four compartments (litter, plastic, paper and metal separately).

Activities and communications

3.3 The project launched on July 27th and was featured in the Belfast Telegraph, Belfast Live and Belfast Media. (See Appendix 2) On-the-ground promotion included:

- In-person by the CNS Environmental Education and awareness team, who attended events during the summer to engage with the public
- The Singing Street Sweepers' were present in the city centre and sang recycling-inspired songs
- The BIDs and other local business stakeholders were informed of the campaign.
- Additional vinyl stickers added to the lids of the bins to reinforce the target materials. (See Appendix 3)

Online and print promotion included:

- A feature in City Matters, with a question to engage residents on the specific issue that coffee cups cannot be recycled. This received over 400 entries.
- Hubbub led a targeted, paid, social media campaign

- An online quiz to educate the public about recycling with the opportunity to win a Belfast City gift card. The quiz was viewed 1,150 times, and completed by 252 people.
- The council promoted the campaign through their channels, with the most popular post being the Singing Street Sweepers, with content receiving 204 likes on Instagram and Facebook.
- In total, across the council and Hubbub activity, the social media posts reached 138,690 people, with engagement of 2064.

Campaign Impact

3.4 The campaign was assessed by collecting public feedback, feedback from the street cleansing teams, and an external waste audit. The post-campaign survey is ongoing but early results have recorded that:

- 47.8% of people had seen the new bins
- 63% of people agreeing that 'it's clear what can be recycled in them'
- 78% of people agreeing they are more noticeable than the old bins.
- 58.7% satisfied or very satisfied with recycling on street in Belfast

3.5 A number of people left comments expressing their interest in seeing more recycling bins in Belfast. In person surveying led by the engagement team found that:

- People seemed to like the bins and really liked the yellow colour.
- They also thought the messaging was really clear in terms of what can go into each side.
- Most people say that they recycle at home but really good to see option of doing it on the street/in town.

3.6 An external consultancy was recruited to undertake a five-day waste composition analysis of the bins from all 25 bins across Belfast. They looked at both compartments of the bins, with bags taken from the general waste side and recycling side. The recycling survey's timing coincided with a week of poor weather. This meant footfall levels were lower, and in previous Hubbub campaigns poor weather has been shown to increase levels of contamination. Whilst ideally, data would be collected over a longer period, taking into account people's behaviour at different times of the year and weather, it does offer an insight into a potential baseline, giving some sense of the performance of the bins under less-than-ideal conditions.

- 3.7 The audit showed that, an overwhelming majority of people were successfully placing the plastic bottles and cans in the recycling. Given the relative lightness of a plastic bottle and can in comparison to other items, analysing by weight, the standard measure for waste and recycling, does not always clearly demonstrate the composition accurately. For example, one small glass bottle weighs around 200 grams, in comparison to a plastic bottle or can could weigh 10-15 grams.
- 3.8 Therefore, an item count was undertaken for key categories to establish a capture rate. This is defined as how much targeted recyclable material is found in the recycling as opposed to the general waste stream.
- 3.9 From the bags sampled, the capture rate by count of the target materials was:
- 731 plastic bottles out of 862 (84.9%) were found in recycling, with 131 plastic bottles ending up in the general waste
 - 721 out of 885 aluminium cans (81.5%) were counted in recycling, with 164 ending up in the general waste.
- 3.10 This demonstrates that target materials were ending up in the right place and across these five days 1452 items were collected for recycling. Across a year, you might expect to see around 70,000 items collected. This does not take into account the behaviour on periods of good weather when footfall is higher in the parks and city centre.
- 3.11 When the audit looked at the average composition of both the general waste and recycling side of each bin, it found that by weight:
- In the general waste bin, 4.4% of the material collected was plastic bottles and cans
 - Whilst the recycling, 29.8% of the material collected was plastic bottles and cans, rising to 43.8% when you include plastic bottles that still contain liquid.
- 3.12 The table below represents the composition, by weight, of the recycling.

Category	Detail	Percentage
Recycling-on-the-go target materials*	Plastic bottles (empty and full) and drinks cans	43.8%
Recyclable at the kerbside (excl. target)	Recyclable at the kerbside but not targeted (recyclable paper & card, drink & food cartons, other	12.4%

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 9th January, 2024**

	plastic packaging, plastic cups, cup lids, glass bottles & jars and other recyclables	
Not recyclable at the kerbside	Residual waste material, disposable vapes, coffee cups, soft drinks cups, compostable packaging, loose liquid, recyclable paper & card contaminated and other plastic packaging contaminated	34.5%
Loose liquid	From open containers and incoming rain	9.3%
Total		100%

* Plastic bottles that contained liquid, which often may not be recycled as they are deemed too heavy by the automated sorting process but are commonly believed to be recyclable.

3.13 Despite the successful capturing of the correct target materials there were still some issues with contamination. One item in particular that was binned incorrectly was coffee cups. However, the capture rate for this ending up in the recycling (incorrectly) was just 17.2%, showing that in most cases people were correctly disposing of these in the general waste. In the parks, some residual waste included a pair of football boots and other non-recyclable waste.

3.14 More generally, and most importantly, the contamination levels were low enough that the recycling could be sent for further processing.

What's next

3.15 Members should note that additional monies have been identified through the climate fund to support the rollout of these bins into the four quadrants of the city. A report will be taken to the climate board at the end of January and following that plans will be made to purchase and install the bins. It is proposed the bins will retain the same branding and stickers etc. Any rollout will include a communication and awareness raising plan. This plan will also target reducing contamination in order to maximise the quality of collected recycling from these bins.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.16 The costs of the pilot were met by Hubbub with no additional OSS costs incurred. Members should note there is £45,000 secured from the climate fund for the purchase and installation of the bins for the next phase. The Council's Open Space and Streetscene service is currently considering how the collection and servicing

of the new bins will be carried out long-term and the cost implications of this.

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

3.17 None.”

The Committee noted the content of the report and the planned next steps.

Bird Strike Management at George Best Belfast City Airport

The Committee was advised that the control of birds in the flight path to the George Best Belfast City Airport (GBBCA) was a requirement of the airport’s Civil Aviation Authority licence. In line with GBBCA’s national aerodrome license requirements and associated guidance material presented in CAP772: Wildlife Hazard Management at Aerodromes, the airport was required to identify sources of risk and to reduce and maintain risk to an acceptable level in compliance with the Civil Aviation Authority licensing requirements.

The Committee was reminded that, at its December 2022 meeting, permission had been granted for a similar request. The GBBCA had subsequently reported that the rook management undertaken during January 2023 had shown a further reduction in nesting rooks the following spring.

The Members were advised that the airport had again identified the need to continue the current management to reduce and discourage rooks from re-laying in the areas used in the previous year. The proposed works would include the removal of old rook nests and any necessary structural pruning of preferred nesting trees, along with the reduction of shelter provided by ivy. As in previous years, GBBCA would appoint a suitable contractor with experience to carry out the required work.

A Member noted the need for the required works from a health and safety perspective but requested that the Council write to the GBBCA to seek clarity as to whether it sought to reduce and manage the rooks at Victoria Park or to totally eradicate them, as he would be uncomfortable if this was their long-term intent.

The Committee:

- agreed to the request from George Best Belfast City Airport to permit access under licence to Victoria Park to facilitate rookery management, in particular, the removal of old rook nests and nest site discouragement during January 2024;
- noted that any decision to grant permission was subject to a legal agreement that would be developed by the Council’s Legal Services Department which would ensure that any works were permissible, and the required NIEA licence and consents were in place;
- agreed that, as the works need to be completed by the end of January, any licence would be progressed under the Strategic Director’s delegated

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 9th January, 2024**

authority. If agreed, the licence would permit works to commence in mid-January and end on the 31st of January 2024 (subject to the terms and conditions); and

- the Committee agreed to write to George Belfast City Airport asking it to clarify if it was seeking to reduce and manage the number of rooks at Victoria Park or to ultimately eradicate them from the area.

HS Partnership Liaison Role

The Committee considered a report which sought the continued support from Belfast City Council for a 2-year extension to the current contract for the Health and Safety Partnership Liaison Officer (PLO) post, until the end of the 2025/2026 financial year.

The Director of City Services explained that the role had originally been created in 2010 and continued to be hosted by Lisburn and Castlereagh Borough Council. The aim of the role was to ensure the effective partnership working relationships and operational delivery of the joint Health and Safety strategy between the local authorities across Northern Ireland and the HSENI.

In order to ensure continuity of the post beyond March 2024, and to facilitate retention of the current postholder, Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council had asked the other funding partners to confirm their ongoing support. The Members were advised that Belfast City Council's contribution to the funding of this post would be approximately £6,000 per annum and the Director confirmed that that had been included within the budget allocation.

The Committee approved the continued contribution to the joint partner funding for the Health and Safety Partner liaison Officer post until the end of the 2025/2026 financial year.

Dual Language Street Signage

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplate in Irish at, Mount Eagles Glen, Emersons Lane, Dunblane Avenue, Floral Gardens, Cardigan Drive, Thornberry Road and Mill Valley Road.

Proposal to Name New Street and Install Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee approved the applications for the naming of three new streets in the city, namely:

Proposed Name	Location	Applicant
Black Ridge Gardens	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association
Black Ridge Way	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association
Black Ridge Heights	Off Monagh By Pass, BT11	Apex Housing Association

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 9th January, 2024**

Chairperson

People and Communities Committee

Wednesday, 24th January, 2024

REMOTE MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
Councillors Bell, Bower, R. Brooks,
T. Black, Canavan, M. Donnelly,
R. M. Donnelly, Maghie,
Ó Néill and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance; and
Mr. D. Sales, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mrs. C. Matthews, Director of Resources and Fleet; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported from Councillors Doherty and Flynn.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations were reported.

Restricted Item

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

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

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.

**Special People and Communities Committee,
Wednesday, 24th January, 2024**

Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2024/25

(Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance, attended in connection with this item).

The Committee considered a report, which had been prepared by the Director of Finance, in relation to the establishment of the District Rate and the compilation of the Estimates of Revenue Expenditure for the year 2024/2025.

The Director outlined that the paper should not be subject to call-in as it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council and the public's interest in striking the district rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February, 2024.

He referred to the cash limit for the People and Communities Committee for 2024/2025, as recommended by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 19th January, and outlined the next steps in the rate setting process leading to the setting of the district rate by the Council at its meeting in February 2024.

Following consideration, the Committee noted the next steps in the rate setting process and:

- agreed a cash limit for the People and Communities Committee for 2024/25 of £105,332,936 and the individual service cash limits; and
- agreed that the decision would not be subject to call-in, given that it would cause unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February, 2024.

Chairperson

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 10th January, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

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

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

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor McMullan.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the 6th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th January, subject to the amendment under the heading "Update on the Fleadh Cheoil" in that the Council agreed to expand the officer and Elected Member representation at the 2024 events.

Declarations of Interest

In relation to item 5.a) Major Events Update, Councillor McCabe declared an interest, in that she was employed by Féile an Phobail and Councillor Maskey declared an interest, in that a family member was employed by Féile an Phobail and they both left the meeting whilst the item was being considered.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item was restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to exclude the members of the press and public from the meeting during discussion of the following item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 10th January, 2024**

information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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.

**City Imagining Investment Programme –
Cultural Multi Annual Grants**

The Director of Economic Development provided an update on the outcome of the cultural multi-annual grants funding process and outlined the recommended grants for approval.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Duffy,
Seconded by Councillor Walsh,

Resolved - that a report be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to explore the potential for alternative in-year funding for those organisations that did not meet the threshold to receive Cultural Multi Annual Grants.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report;
- Agreed to the recommendations for cultural multi- annual grants 2024-2028, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report; and
- Agreed that a report be referred to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to explore the potential for alternative in-year funding for those organisations that did not meet the threshold to receive Cultural Multi Annual Grants.

Request to Present

Translink - Weavers Cross / Belfast Transport Hub

The Committee agreed to receive a presentation from Translink on the Belfast Grand Central Station at a Special Meeting of the Committee and that the invitation for the presentation would include all Members of the Council.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

Future City Centre Update

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

"1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update the Committee on positive activity and messaging aligned to the five pillars of the previously agreed Future City Centre Programme.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- I. Note the update as set out within this report and Appendix 2.**

3.0 Background

3.1 The City Growth and Regeneration Committee at its meeting on 8 November 2023, approved the revised Future City Centre Programme and monitoring framework. Members will recall that the Framework (attached at Appendix 1) is supported by eight programme objectives, measured by 14 strategic indicators and underpinned by work within five thematic pillars, as below. The programmes of work and activities included in each pillar are not exhaustive and many involve other partners but they are intended to reflect the broad range of activities that are ongoing and are managed and reported via programme and project management arrangements for the various strands:

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 10th January, 2024**

Regeneration & Connectivity	Business & Investment	Animation & Distinctive Offering	Clean, Green, Inclusive & Safe	Vulnerability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major regeneration schemes BRCDD projects including Belfast Stories City Centre Living / Houseing-led regeneration Connectivity and Active Travel Connected spaces & places Vacant-to-Vibrant capital grant programme Matchmaking service to address vacancy A Bolder Vision Preservation of built heritage Environmental improvements Cathedral Gardens redevelopment Waterfront promenade framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business support programmes Attracting new-to-market brands City Investment Service Business tourism - conference subvention Night-time economy Business premises for cultural organisations/creative industries Test trading at markets Positioning the city to compete Maximising international opportunities in FDI, trade and education Smart Belfast programme Belfast Smart District 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2024 Year of Culture Projects Cultural animation activities and events, pop-up activities 2 Royal Avenue programming UNESCO City of Music/ music strategy implementation Meanwhile uses Lighting Interventions Night-time economy Food and drink tourism City Hall exhibition including Augment the City experience Street dressing/ street art Annual events programme City markets Belfast HUB-IN at Maritime Mile Belfast Stories visitor attraction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhanced city centre cleansing regimes and tackling graffiti City centre cleanliness charter Safer Neighbourhood Officer city centre patrols ASB Officer advice/guidance Imagining use of open and civic spaces (support retail/hospitality sectors). Support the provision of parklets and greening the city initiatives. EVC strategy Tourism Accessibility Programme Green Tourism Accreditation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue multi-stakeholder approach to support alcohol and drug addiction; and rough sleeping. Delivery of Complex Lives (whole systems and people-centred approach)
<p>Cross-cutting enablers: Local Development Plan; Digital innovation; Inclusive Growth; Sustainability & Resilience; Development of a robust evidence base providing objective data on the above indicators and measures - to be used to inform the development of future actions; Taking an 'evidence led approach' by utilising best practice and corporate membership of IPM; and Legislation - Reform of licensing</p>				

3.2 As previously reported to Members the Future City Centre has emerged as a priority area within the ‘Our Place’ theme of the Belfast Agenda. Community Planning has provided the vehicle to anchor core city centre governance structures (Future City Centre Leadership Group and Strategic Leadership Group (Complex Lives)).

3.3 At their meeting in September 2023 the All – Party Working Group on the City Centre had agreed the need to amplify any positive messaging in relation to the city centre, whilst simultaneously seeking to ensure that the various issues are dealt with via the appropriate governance structures and the short, medium and longer term plans, projects and initiatives are brought forward working in partnerships with the wide range of public and private stakeholders. At the meeting of the working group in December 2023 a presentation was delivered in respect of this which aligned to the five pillars of the Future City Centre Programme and picked up on key highlights with the city centre retail market landscape, footfall, and media on activities under each of the FCC pillars (noting that these are a combination of Council led, partner and stakeholder led, and public and private sectors initiatives).

4.0 Main Report

4.1 Work is ongoing around the development of the Future City Centre Monitoring Dashboard, aligned to the FCC framework which was noted and agreed at City Growth and Regeneration

Committee in November 2023. It is planned that this will be presented to the Committee in Q1 2024.

- 4.2 In the interim and pending presentation of the FCC Monitoring Dashboard and by way of an update aligned to the vision, objectives, pillars and strategic indicators of the FCC programme Appendix 2 has been collated providing supporting evidence on positive activities aligned to the five pillars:**
- Regeneration and Connectivity**
 - Business and Investment**
 - Animation and Distinctive Offering**
 - Clean, Green, Inclusive and Safe**
 - Vulnerability**
- 4.3 In addition to this Members will note that City Centre footfall increased by 7.5% from September – November this year compared to 2022. For the same period average weekly footfall was 703,349 an increase of approx. 50,000 from last year (654,083). Footfall figures are one of the strategic indicators identified for the FCC Programme and provide a measurement of vibrancy or pedestrian activity measured using 6 fixed location cameras in the city centre. Council have further access to data on city centre visitors which has found the city centre is attracting more visitors from Belfast communities, areas within a 2km radius have an average increase of 80% more visits. However there it is evidence based on September – October 2022 to the same period in 2023, that there has been a significant negative decrease on the visitors coming from outside of the Belfast City Council area to the city centre.**
- 4.4 As reported to the City Growth & Regeneration Committee in November 2023, to support the wider vacancy programme and to complement the Vacant to Vibrant capital grant scheme, officers are also delivering a ‘Matchmaking’ service, with the assistance of a commercial agent, Frazer Kidd. A general market commentary was included in the report to Members in November 2023 which noted a number of new retailers / occupiers including some that are first to Region and Island brands for Belfast. Officers are continuing to build on existing market commentary and intelligence through continued engagement with the commercial agent, with positive forecasting in future development of vacant units in the primary retail core such as Donegal Place, Castle Lane and Arthur Street expected to come forward in 2024.**
- 4.5 Members are asked to note Appendix 2, which highlights a summary of activity and media reports across the various FCC**

pillars including Council commencing procurement to seek a private sector partner to take forward £630m housing led regeneration opportunity, design team appointed for Belfast Stories, jobs announcements across private sector, and launch of the Innovation Challenge Fund. Member are asked to note that as well as the report on the FCC Monitoring Dashboard, a paper on the Belfast Regeneration Tracker is also scheduled for Q1 2024 which will detail market activity across all asset classes retail, residential, leisure, offices etc.

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

None

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

There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications associated with this report.”

The Committee noted the update as set out within the report and [Appendix 2](#).

Responses from Department for Infrastructure

The Committee was notified that a response had been received from the Department for Infrastructure following questions raised by Members at the Special meeting of the Committee in November 2023 in relation to the DfI Autumn Statement Presentation, together with correspondence in response to the consultation responses which the Council had submitted on the proposed traffic restriction schemes on Dunville St, Sorella St and Belmont Church Road as agreed at the December 2023 meeting of the Committee.

The Committee noted the correspondence.

Positioning the City to Compete

Major Events Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on

- **A summary of the Maritime Festival Developmental plans**
- **Activity delivered as part of a Christmas programme in November - December 2023**

- An update on St Patrick's Day Celebrations 2024
- Request for funding to support Seachtain na Gaeilge

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- note the contents of this report on the Maritime Festival
- note the contents of this report on recent Christmas activity
- note the update on St Patrick's Celebrations arrangements

3.0 Main report

3.1 Belfast Maritime Festival 2023

The purpose of this part of the report is to provide Members with a summary evaluation of the 2023 Maritime Festival held on 9th & 10th September. The report will also give consideration to options for the 2025 Belfast Maritime Festival Programme.

This year's 'Belfast Maritime Festival' was held on 9th and 10th September 2023 in the Titanic Quarter with a programme that stretched from Queens Quay to HMS Caroline / Titanic Distillers and Sailortown. The aim was to create an inclusive Maritime event that appeals to all demographics celebrating all that is good and creative about Belfast in neutral accessible locations in the city, highlighting our current tourism, heritage, culture and maritime offering and showcasing our existing landmarks in conjunction with partner organisations and stakeholders.

The 2023 festival aimed to meet the development objectives set out in the Connected by Water strategic recommendations:

- A Festival Ready for Investment
- A Festival with Diverse Appeal
- A Giant Opportunity
- A Distinctly Belfast Experience
- A Festival Belonging

3.1.1 A Festival Ready for Investment

This years festival carried a budget from the financial reserve from 2022, in addition to the approved 2023 budget. The festival was successful in receiving TNI International

Events funding to the value of £60,000. In addition to this, the event received a small income from food traders and sail training opportunities resulting in a top line budget of £409,630.00. The event was coordinated and implemented under a governance structure consisting of 3 subgroups – Marcomms, Production / Logistics and Creative. Each subgroup reported into a Programme Board with senior representatives from Belfast City Council, Belfast Harbour and Maritime Belfast Trust. All groups met on a monthly basis opening the opportunity to increase partner circle and reach, with the aim to strengthen both the commercial and creative festival profile.

3.1.2 A Festival with Diverse Appeal

The brand identity chosen for the 2023 event was determined in line with the TNI International Events Funding criteria and agreed TNI / BCC / VB brand playbook targeting *Active Maximisers*: Young families wanting inspirational and educational experiences for their children and *Culture Connection Seekers*: lovers of the arts, history and the outdoors.

Visit Belfast and BCC Corporate Communications developed a regional and out of state campaign, with the initial press release issued to the public on 24th July 2023 with Visit Belfast hosting the festival landing page for all collateral and content relating to the festival and promoting any shared marketing opportunities for partners and stakeholders.

The campaign was rolled out on Outdoor, Radio, Digital channels and Social Media platforms, promoting visitbelfast.com as the call to action with the following statistics recorded:

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 10th January, 2024**

	Format	Adult Coverage	Frequency	Impacts
ROI Maritime	Outdoor	724,000	4	2,896,000
	Radio	917,000	4.2	3,868,000
	Total	1,591,260	6	6,764,000
	Format	Adult Coverage	Frequency	Impacts
NI Maritime	Radio	674,260	4.1	2,778,149
	Radio Social	-	-	31,968
	Competition	-	-	2,081
	Total	674,260	4.1	2,812,198
	Format	Adult Coverage	Frequency	Impacts
Totals	Radio	1,591,260	4	6,646,149
	Outdoor	724,000	4	2,896,000
	Radio Social	-	-	31,968
	Competition	-	-	2,081
	Total	2,315,260	4	9,576,198

In addition Cool FM hosted a competition on their website for 4 weeks, with a reach of 32,000, an entry page reach over 2000 and 724 entries.

The Maritime Festival Landing Page had 9,535 visits, with the Maritime Festival events page having 7,320 visits totalling 16,855 visits.

The Organic Social Media:

Facebook

Impressions:58,811

Engagement: 2,214

Video Plays: 3,296

Twitter

Impressions:26,016

Engagement:398

Video Plays: 2,104

Instagram

Impressions:7,096

Engagements: 15

Campaign Video Ad

A Social Media Video was created, utilising video content from previous Maritime Festival, to promote this year's Belfast Maritime Festival. The video was shared organically as well as set-up as an advert across Facebook & Instagram (via TNI

social media profile's) and Visit Belfast's Twitter and TikTok Ad account. The advert targeted all of Northern Ireland and Dublin corridor audience.

Total Video Ad Campaign Results:
Impressions: 2,667,646
Engagements: 165,060
Video Plays: 920,509

Visit Belfast Dedicated sponsored E-zine to NI and ROI database

NI E-zine sent: database 37K
ROI E-Zine sent: database 13K

NI E-zine Open rate: 25.6% Click through rate: 4.6%
ROI E-zine Open rate: 18.4% Click through rate: 2.1%

Our corporate communications ran a local campaign for T sides with Translink targeting 464,030 people and digital hubs displaying 100,800 ad plays. The festival was also advertised online with Belfast Telegraph and Daily Mirror/Belfast Live online.

Belfast Telegraph

Total Impressions 72,001
Total Clicks 113
Click Through Rate 0.19%

Daily Mirror/Belfast Live Online

Total Impressions 60,010
Total Clicks 113
Click Through Rate 0.19%

The festival brand Identity chosen was a reflection of the overall programme and the programme was coordinated to maintain a family friendly audience, as well as expanding the appeal to a broader audience demographic.

The festival incorporated a trail experience with a Kids' Zone in Queens Quay, offering creative and educational workshops, showcasing little creatures and sealife from the region, sensory play and interactive activity of various art forms.

The vessels berthed (Granuaille, Gunilla, Leader and Harbour Pilot) at the festival were in situ at Queens Quay and Abercorn basin for the public to get onboard. Sailability (Accessible

Sailing) and Brian Boru provided sail opportunities during the festival and Belfast Yacht club displayed the Titanic Model. There was a 'have a go' water experience on hydrobikes for the public to try.

The Arc came alive with local talent providing circus and street theatre on the hour every hour. We programmed live sketch drawings of the event from local artists for those that wanted a calm relaxed experience watching the artists at work.

Hamilton Dock was a showcase of the community codesign photography exhibition that captured raw images of Belfast making up 8 displays that spelt out 'Maritime', providing an excellent photo opportunity for the festival and complementing the overall theme. Hamilton Dock offered the opportunity to catch site of a rare SS Nomadic Lifeboat for the duration of the festival, along with wooden boat demonstrations, oar making, weaving and rope making.

The Titanic Slipways hosted new additions to the festival, including Science Street for curious minds, the Belfast Bazaar selling quirky Belfast local craft and produce and popup street food selling cuisine made from locally sourced ingredients. The trail ended at HMS Caroline & Titanic Distillers with theatre and trad trails.

There was a full diverse music programme across the entire site showcasing Belfast's local musicians with busking at the Lagan footbridge, local bands at the Soundyard and Hamilton Dock, Trad Trails at HMS Caroline and Titanic Distillers and headline acts on the main stage compared by BBC Radio 1 presenter Gemma Bradley.

There was a 'Sail back to Sailortown' evening music event in St Joseph's Church and 2 evening Tours of the Antrim side of the river each day, as well as tours of the Templemore Baths. We worked with bars and restaurants in the area to highlight the extended evening offering as part of the overall festival.

3.1.3 A Giant Opportunity

Key findings from the Economic Impact Report and Visitor Survey from the 2023 Maritime Festival show a growth in out of state visitors, overnight accommodation and economic return from the 2021 event. The increase is expected as we recover from the effects of Covid.

The report findings for the event include:

- An attendance figure of 80,000
- 41% of Visitors from elsewhere in NI (32,800)
- 10% of Visitors from GB & ROI (8,000)
- 14% of visitors were staying in accommodation (11,200)
- The estimated direct spend was £1,326,839.26
- 74% gave the festival an overall rating of 8-10, including 25% who rated it as 'Extremely Good'
- 97% of visitors said that the Maritime Festival improves Belfast's reputation as a host for events like these; and improves the reputation of Belfast as a place to visit
- 97% agreed that there should be more events like this in Belfast

This years programme increased the creative ambition and programming by introducing the uniquely Belfast Experience and aligning with our 10 year Cultural Strategy in engaging local suppliers, talent and produce with approximately 70% of festival participants from the Belfast area, with 20% from elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

3.1.4 A Distinctly Belfast Experience

The event location lends itself to the many heritage assets on the Maritime Mile and the overall programme worked complementary to the in situ existing asset provision and tourism infrastructure, encouraging visitor attendance. The heritage sites were given the opportunity to share marketing opportunities, additional programming or discounts as part of the overall event programme.

To progress the event towards the next iteration in 2025, consideration is required for the strong creative direction and theme at the onset of the new festival planning cycle. The creative subgroup formed under the Maritime Governance Structure, will consider measures to address the wider programming.

3.1.5 A Festival Belonging

Maritime Belfast Trust successfully engaged the local community to deliver the photography codesign piece for 2023. The festival offered sail training opportunities to develop and upskill the community and highlight the potential for future careers in the industry with a positive social impact. Sailability provided accessible sailing throughout the duration of the event.

3.1.6 Maritime Festival Development for 2025 Delivery

Belfast 2024 will review commissions within the 2024 programme, that could potentially lend itself to the overall 2025 Maritime Festival through feedback and participation with large scale programming interventions. Any potential codesigns or programme pieces created locally will be carried forward to the Maritime Programme Board for recommendations.

The Maritime Programme Board debrief was held in early December 2023 and a number of event developmental actions were agreed for progression ahead of the 2025 event. It was agreed to establish the financial model based on biannual delivery, while researching more potential avenues to increase revenue/sponsorship. The initial delivery structure will include a planning session with partners to establish the date, footprint, the wider programme and composition of the delivery structures. The festival identity will remain for 2025, with the ambition for a marketing lead and a central marketing budget to exercise greater lead - in time. Officers will continue to work with the industry to highlight an extended evening / weekend programme, while highlighting offers and discounts available for the festival.

The potential to deliver evening events will continue to be explored with the development of partnerships with hospitality and tourism business / offerings and products in the locality. Through the delivery structure, there will be consideration for wider programming and how the local cultural and creative sector can be engaged at an earlier stage in order to create something new and a unique offering for the festival. There will be a continued focus on the opportunity for skill building, through developing the existing sail training programmes, education and codesign pieces.

3.2 Christmas Programme 2023 Evaluation

In 2021 and 2022 and largely as a result of Covid, the City Events Team adopted a different approach to the Christmas programme which replaced the traditional switch-on ceremony. The programme consisted of a combination of creative initiatives such as street performance, projections, music, window dressing and lighting installations, utilising local artists, creatives and designers to create an authentic and engaging experience for all throughout the festive season. In 2022, 2 Royal Ave hosted an uplifted events programme 'Winter's Den'.

A decision to revert to the traditional format of the Christmas Lights switch-on at the front of City Hall was taken on 4th October 2023. The 'Let's Glow Belfast' Christmas Lights Switch-On event successfully took place on Saturday 18th November 6.30pm-7.30pm, with a celebration of local music, theatre and dance, compered by the Cool FM Breakfast Team (media partnership) with Lord Mayor and special invited guest Dáithí Mac Gabhann officially switching on the lights.

Due to the nature of the t-shaped event site comprising Donegall Square North and Donegall Place (Fountain Lane and Castle Lane cross), a busy city centre with live traffic and heavy pedestrian footfall, it was necessary to close roads to facilitate event infrastructure installation and de-rig. The City Events Team engaged extensively with stakeholders such as Translink, MarketPlace Europe, DfI, public hire taxi and the business sector, as well as with internal council units, to coordinate the build, event delivery and de-rig with as minimal impact as possible to normal business. Various road closures and suspensions were in place 2am Saturday 18 through to 5am on Sunday 19 November.

In excess of 10,000 citizens and visitors gathered to enjoy the event. The event was free and ticketed via Visit Belfast. There was an initial release on the morning of 8 November, with Members further requesting a second release to accommodate those who couldn't secure tickets during the morning release. The City Hall Christmas Market opened at 12 noon the same day.

The geographical breakdown of tickets booked through Visit Belfast revealed 53% Belfast postcodes and 45.5% Rest of NI postcodes. Less than 0.5% were Republic of Ireland or Rest of UK postcodes and less than 1% were unknown.

Marketing and Communications Activity

Council operated a digital campaign with online advertising to promote the Let's Glow Belfast Christmas Lights switch-on event taking place on 18th November, as well as Winters Den season in 2 Royal Avenue. Council directed people to www.belfastcity.gov.uk/christmas URL, where the 18th November event information was displayed prominently on the page.

Bauer NI were the official media partner and offered a strong package across Cool FM and Downtown from 1 Nov – 18 Nov, including promo trails, competition package, live reads,

2 interviews with Lord Mayor, and outdoor broadcast with Downtown's Neal McClelland. Pete, Paulo and Rebecca from Cool FM's Breakfast Team were comperes on stage at the event.

Visit Belfast offered box office and visitor servicing, as well as related marketing activity such as digital screen display and social and digital campaign.

The event was featured on the front cover of City Matters, circulated to just under 160k homes w/c 6th November and full event details of the switch-on and Winter's Den were highlighted on page 4 and in the What's On section.

A press release was issued 2nd November to promote the event. From 2 Nov – 25 November, media coverage was secured on Belfast Live, Belfast Telegraph, News Letter, Belfast Media Group, Yahoo UK, 4NI, Belfast Times and Planet Radio. In addition the media partnership with Bauer NI included coverage across Cool FM and Downtown.

Christmas Market

The Christmas Market ran this year from Saturday 18th November to Friday 22nd December. The opening weekend welcomed approximately 63,000 people. Market Place Europe Limited (MPEL) has held the Continental Markets contract for the past 18 years and were awarded the contract for the next 3+2 years. Changes to the contract this year include a larger seating area and food court area and an enhanced Christmas experience with themed and animated walkways. There was over 100 stalls and the new contract also set out the requirement for 40% local traders and 60% continental traders. There was a Santa's Grotto supporting the Lord Mayors Charity and a return of free school educational tours, which was extended this year to out of school hours childcare and youth service providers. MPEL also ran the Jolly Big Business Boost offering a free chalet to a young business. When the Continental Market trades at the front of the city hall the footfall increases into St Georges Market and throughout the city Centre. This year the market was the busiest ever.

3.2.1 Alignment to the Cultural Strategy

The 'City Imagining Strategy' approved by Council has a focus on supporting developing local arts and cultural organisations, through funding, commissioning and capacity building. In this regard, Oh Yeah were engaged to arrange a performance by FYA Fox, who is a graduate of their creative

talent development programme; Lyric Theatre were invited to show an extract of their upcoming Christmas production Hansel and Gretel; DU Dance were engaged to choreograph a dance piece by their youth performance group 'Belfast Boys' and Fortwilliam Musical Society were invited to produce a medley of singalong Christmas favourites. Also on the bill were leading NI soul band Manukahunney and by invitation of Lord Mayor, St Patrick's Primary School choir. Meet and greet performers were also engaged from 4 local companies.

Following on from 2022's model of uplifting the Christmas programme in 2 Royal Avenue, the Winters Den opened on Saturday 18th November and continues to Sunday 7th January 2024. The Winters Den season features a selection of free entry festive activities. Belfast based design agency UsFolk were re-engaged to provide artwork for Winters Den, comprising decoration inside the building, an AR interactive game and animation. The Winter's Den footfall from 18th Nov- 13th December is 30,255.

- Opening weekend footfall 4919 (3353 18th & 1566 19th) with outdoor animation provided by Firepoise and Play Make Believe, with live music and a twilight market inside.
- UsFolk animation projections in situ 1st Dec-2nd Jan 2024. Very well received by the public and building users evidenced by feedback online
- 37 funded workshops/events, supported by 27 external events/markets/ performances. All events advertised as part of Winter's Den are free to the public.
- 27 community groups and 14 schools engaged including 15 community/school musical performances
- 9 markets including approximately 140 makers/groups/artists (Potters Markets, Twilight Markets, BCC Pop up Markets and the Big Art Sale)
- Collections for Cash for Kids, Stuff a Bus and Community Search and Rescue
- Santa's Post Office (Belfast One BID) opened 18th Nov-17th Dec and remains very popular
- Venue dressed by MayWe including a living 12ft tree that will be replanted in January, an art installation by local artist Elaine Taylor and themed with cut out stands and a supporting AR trail by UsFolk.
- Lord Mayor in attendance at Dog Fashion Show and Jingle and Jazz events.

**3.2.2 Let's Glow Belfast Christmas Lights Switch-On
18th November - Socio-Economic Survey results**

- A total of 118 face-to-face interviews were conducted with visitors to the Let's Glow Belfast event. A further 137 interviews were completed online by visitors who had booked tickets to the event. 255 interviews were completed in total. The overall estimated direct spend for the Let's Glow Belfast event was £193,950.
- 50% of survey respondents were from the Belfast City Council area, and a further 45% were from elsewhere in Northern Ireland. A small number of visitors were from GB (1%), ROI (1%) and outside the UK and Ireland (2%). 6% of survey respondents were staying in accommodation away from home.
- The total average spend per group was £86.20. 78% ate out during the event.
- 75% of survey respondents attended the event with children.
- 46% said they had no preference on when tickets became available, with 28% preferring them to be released in the morning and 24% after work hours.
- Over half (52%) said they preferred the setup for this event, while 40% would prefer a ticket free event with entertainment hubs and a parade at various sites across the City Centre.
- 51% gave the Let's Glow Belfast event an overall rating of between 8 and 10, including 19% who rated it as '10 - Extremely good'. At the other end of the scale, 14% gave it a rating between 1-3.
- 90% thought that events like these encourage people to come to Belfast, while 93% of those living in Belfast said that events like these improve their sense of well-being and community.
- 62% of respondents living outside NI confirmed that the event makes them more likely to visit Belfast again, while 75% commented it makes them more likely to recommend friends and family to visit Belfast.
- 92% agreed that there should be more events like this in Belfast.
- 94% said that they felt safe during the event.
- 83% of respondents stated the Let's Glow Belfast event improves the reputation of Belfast as a place to visit; 80% said it improves Belfast's reputation as a host for events like these.

3.3 Festive Lighting Scheme

The Switch On event marked the turning on of the festive lighting scheme throughout the city centre, comprising a number of cross street features and pole mount features. In liaison with Facilities Management, the lighting of the City Hall façade also took place the same evening. Belfast Christmas Market.

4 St Patrick's Day Update

At the SP&R Committee held in November, members requested a report be submitted to CG&R at the earliest opportunity to outline the challenges of the 2023 procurement process and an update on the award of the other elements of the St Patrick's Day programme.

Belfast City Council's previous model for the delivery of St. Patricks Day celebrations in Belfast, consisted of a Carnival Parade along a city centre route, followed by a free music concert for all ages in the city centre from 1.30pm-4pm. In 2021, a new approach was adopted for St Patrick's Day Belfast 2022 & 2023. Following an expression of interest, Council agreed to directly invest in the local sector through four Creative Development Awards. These projects then progressed from feasibility to pilot stage for the Festival in 2022. Following the delivery of the pilot projects in March 2022 an evaluation process was completed, with all four projects again supported in 2023.

2024 - 2026 Approach

A tender for a similar approach to the Expression of Interest was developed and as before, the alignment to the Cultural Strategy.

This resulted in four Lots being offered for:

- A Parade / Pageant
- City Centre Weekend Music Programme
- Cross City Music Showcase
- An 'Open Call'

Tender issued 28th July 2023, closed 30th August 2023.

The outcome of this process was that one submission was received for Lot 3 only, which was subsequently awarded to Féile an Phobail. Lots 1, 2 and 4 received a Nil return.

Further to discussions with CPS, Beat Carnival and Tradfest were approached at the end of October to deliver the Parade element and City Centre Weekend Music Programme respectively. Tradfest subsequently to deliver Lot 2, and this was agreed at SP&R in November.

Lots 2 and 3 are being delivered by Feile and Tradfest respectively. With Beat declining the opportunity to deliver Lot 1 in mid November, Officers have taken forward the option to deliver Lot 1 (the Parade) in-house, due to timescales and the limited availability of organisations to provide assets. However, discussions have since taken place with a number of organisations on the provision of professional performance, community engagement, and parade assets.

Lot 4 sought to consider open call proposals. There was no response to this tender and subsequently council have received a request to support Seachtain na Gaeilge, a 17 day festival organised by Conradh na Gaeilge. The festival gives an opportunity to everyone to enjoy Irish, whether a fluent speaker, learner or someone with a cúpla focal, with a calendar of entertaining and fun events for every type of interest and every age group. Voluntary and community groups, local councils, schools, libraries, and music, sports, arts and culture organisations organise events for Seachtain na Gaeilge le Energia in their local area. In 2023, Belfast City held over 100 events during Seachtain na Gaeilge and held the flagship event, Spraoi Cois Lao, with over 5000 attendees from all cultures and backgrounds on the day.

Members are asked to consider granting this via a funding agreement to the value of £50k for delivery in 2024, budgets will be sought from within current departmental allocation in repurposing the Lot 4 monies.

3.5 Major Events

Members will be aware that at a meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 28 August 2019, a new ten-year cultural strategy for Belfast, *A City Imagining*, was agreed. As part of this strategy a new investment approach was approved and this model committed to a partnership approach to supporting the cultural sector, with the aim of sustaining and developing accessible cultural activity and infrastructure across Belfast and creating the conditions for long-term transformation. It was agreed that this partnership model should be applied to the direct delivery of City events by Council as well as funded programmes of activity.

Supporting Belfast to become a recognised cultural destination through a coherent approach to events and festivals. This would include a range of approaches from bidding for major events to supporting local festivals and importantly creating a portfolio of Signature homegrown Belfast Events.

Members should note that officers are reviewing this as an ongoing piece of work and will forward a report to committee in due course that looks at the implications of revisiting city events and associated resource implications.

3.6 Financial and Resource Implications

The events budgets had been approved at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 8th March 2023, and this included Maritime, Christmas, St Patrick’s Day Celebrations and the Events Development Fund.

The Maritime Festival was delivered within budget.

Seachtain na Gaeilge funding agreement to the value of £50k for delivery in 2024 will be sought from within current departmental allocation.

Circa £123,000 was allocated to the Christmas Opening Event. However, the format change and necessary logistical arrangements resulted in a slight overspend on this figure; although it had been forecast that the return to the format would be circa £129k.

Currently, there is no budget allocation for Halloween activity. All other expenditure is within existing departmental budgets and approvals.

3.7 Equality & Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

During discussion, the Director explained further the Christmas Lighting Scheme and Christmas Market contracts and highlighted that at a new tender for the festive lighting scheme was being developed.

Members raised concerns regarding the lack of expressions of interest to take forward the St. Patrick’s Day parade and highlighted the need to develop the process and examine feedback from the delivery groups.

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 10th January, 2024**

Members of the Committee also indicated that the Council's major events could be expanded to include New Year Eve, Halloween and Twelfth of July celebrations.

In response, the Director of Economic Development advised that officers continued to explore various options for the delivery of major events and engage with providers to develop the process and that a report would be submitted to a future Committee to provide an update on this, together with expanding major events and options around dispersing Markets across the city.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Agreed to the request for funding to support Seachtain na Gaeilge to the value of £50k for delivery in 2024 from within current departmental allocation;
- Noted the contents of the report on the Maritime Festival;
- Noted the contents of the report on recent Christmas activity and that a new tender for the festive lighting scheme was being developed;
- Noted the update on St Patrick's Celebrations arrangements; and
- Noted that officers continued to explore various options for the delivery of major events and engage with providers to develop the process and that a report would be submitted to a future Committee to provide an update on this, together with expanding major events and options around dispersing Markets across the city.

Update on Draft Tourism Strategy Consultation Response

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting in December 2023, it had considered the draft response to the Department for the Economy (DfE) consultation on the Draft Tourism Strategy for Northern Ireland and had agreed to the draft response to the consultation, with the additional request to emphasis neighbourhood tourism.

The Director of Economic Development advised that there had been ongoing discussions with key partners in the sector and Visit Belfast and the draft response had been updated to reflect these points.

The Committee:

- approved the update to the draft response to include the neighbourhood references as set out in [Appendix 1](#); and
- noted that the consultation response would be submitted in line with the deadline of 12th January, 2024 as a draft response, subject to ratification by Council on 1st February and any further

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Wednesday, 10th January, 2024**

comments or amendments at Council would be forwarded to the Department.

Strategic and Operational Issues

Notice of Motions Update

The Committee was provided with an update on the Motions which had been assigned to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee. It was highlighted that one Motion had been recommended for closure.

The Committee:

- Noted the updates to all Motions that the Committee was responsible for as referenced in Appendix 1; and
- Agreed to the closure of one Motion, as referenced in [Appendix 1](#) and noted in paragraph 3.4.

Chairperson

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Tuesday, 23rd January, 2024

SPECIAL REMOTE MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report associated with the following item was restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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

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 and District Rate 2024/25

The Committee considered a report in relation to the establishment of the District Rate and the compilation of the Estimates of Revenue Expenditure for the year 2024/2025.

The Director of Finance presented an overview of the budgetary pressures facing the Council in 2024/25 and outlined that the paper should not be subject to call-in as it

**City Growth and Regeneration Committee,
Tuesday, 23rd January, 2024**

would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council and the public's interest in striking the district rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February, 2024.

He reported the cash limit for the Committee for 2024/25 as recommended by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on the 19th January, 2024 and outlined the next steps in the rate setting process leading to the setting of the rate by Council at its meeting in February 2024.

Following consideration, the Committee noted the next steps in the rate setting process and:

- Agree the cash limit of £21,550,927 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2024/25 and the individual service estimates detailed in Table 4 of the report; and
- Agreed that this decision would not be subject to call-in because it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February, 2024.

Chairperson

Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 17th January, 2024

MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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

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

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th December 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 8th January, 2024, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Delegated Matters

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

HMO Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority

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

Licences Issued Under Delegated Authority

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

Application for the Variation of a 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence for The Topsy Bird, 96-100 Ann Street

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 To consider an application for the variation of a 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence based on the Council's standard conditions, to provide outdoor musical entertainment for:**

<u>Area and Location</u>	<u>Ref. No.</u>	<u>Applicant</u>
Topsy Bird (Brewers Yard) 96 – 100 Ann Street Belfast, BT1 3HH	WK/2022/02837	Mr Bobby Robertson, Glendola Leisure (Holdings) Limited. 364 High Street, Harlington, UB3 5LF

- 1.2 A location map is attached as Appendix 1**

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Taking into account the information presented and any representations made in respect of the application you are required to make a decision to either:**

- a) Approve the application for the variation of the 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence in the proposed area as requested, or**
- b) Approve the application for the variation with special conditions, or**
- c) Refuse the application for the variation of the 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence.**

- 2.2 If an application is refused, or special conditions are attached to the licence to which the applicant does not consent, then the applicant may appeal the Council's decision within 21 days of notification of that decision to the County Court. In the case that the applicant subsequently decides to appeal, outdoor entertainment may not be provided until any such appeal is determined.**

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Members are reminded that, at your meeting on 16 August 2023, due to concerns raised by Translink you agreed to approve the application for the grant of the 7-Day Annual Entertainments Licence for the Topsy Bird, subject to terms and conditions in relation to the management of sound.

3.2 The following special conditions relating to noise were attached to the outdoor licence:-

- 1. Entertainment provided to the outdoor area must be no greater than 75dBLAeq at 1m from the loudspeaker.**
- 2. Licensee to maintain a noise monitoring logbook to ensure compliance with the agreed music noise level and keep a regular check on volume levels at noise sensitive facades.**
- 3. Music must be provided through the in-house sound system.**
- 4. Provide good management practice to ensure that no excessive noise levels are generated from patrons in the beer garden.**
- 5. If noise disturbance is caused by Entertainment the noise level may require to be reduced to ensure that it does not impact on local properties.**

3.3 The applicant has applied to vary the hours during which entertainment may be provided, within the outdoor area.

3.4 The days and hours during which entertainment may be provided under the terms of the current Outdoor Entertainments Licence are:

- Friday 4:00 pm to 10.30pm**
- Saturday 2:00 pm to 8.30pm**
- Sunday 2:00 pm to 8.30pm**

3.5 The days and hours proposed to provide entertainment within the outdoor area pursuant to the application to vary the outdoor licence are:

- Monday - Saturday 11:30 am to 11.00pm**
- Sunday 12:30 pm to 11.00pm**

3.6 A layout plan is attached as Appendix 2.

- 3.7 Members are reminded that all applications for an Outdoor Entertainments Licences must be brought before Committee for consideration.

Representations

- 3.8 Public notice of the application has been placed and no written representation has been lodged as a result of the advertisement.

PSNI

- 3.9 The Police Service of Northern Ireland have been consulted in relation to the application and have confirmed that they have no objection to the application.

- 3.10 A copy of their response is included as Appendix 3 to this report.

NIFRS

- 3.11 The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service have been consulted in relation to the outdoor application and have confirmed that they have no objection to the application.

Health, safety and welfare

- 3.12 The premises have been subject to inspections as part of the licensing application process and all technical requirements and associated operational and management procedures have been checked and are satisfactory.

Noise

- 3.13 No noise complaints have been received by the Service since the outdoor entertainment licence was issued on 16 August 2023.

Applicant

- 3.14 The applicant, and/or their representative will be available at your meeting to answer any queries you may have in relation to the application.

4.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.1 None.

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

5.1 There are no issues associated with this report.”

The Committee granted approval to the application for the variation of the 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence as outlined in paragraph 3.5 of the report.

**Application for the Grant of a 7-Day Annual Outdoor
Entertainments Licence at 2 Royal Avenue**

The Building Control Manager presented the following report to the Committee, highlighting that the application was from the Council:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To consider an application for the grant of a 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence based on the Council’s standard conditions, to provide outdoor musical entertainment for:

<u>Area and Location</u>	<u>Ref. No.</u>	<u>Applicant</u>
2RA 2 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 1DA	WK/2022/03213	Mr John Greer, Place and Economy Dept., Belfast City Council, 9 Adelaide, 9-21 Adelaide Street,

1.2 A location map is attached as Appendix 1

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Taking into account the information presented and any representations made in respect of the application you are required to make a decision to either:

- a) Approve the application for the grant of the 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence in the proposed area as requested, or**
- b) Approve the application for the grant with special conditions, or**
- c) Refuse the application for the grant of the 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence.**

2.2 If an application is refused, or special conditions are attached to the licence to which the applicant does not consent, then the applicant may appeal the Council’s decision within 21 days of notification of that decision to the County Court.

In the case that the applicant subsequently decides to appeal, outdoor entertainment may not be provided until any such appeal is determined.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 The applicant has applied to provide musical performances, in the outdoor areas around the perimeter of their premises. The details of the proposed events are unknown at this stage. However, if an event is planned to take place on this site it would be subject to all technical matters being implemented to the satisfaction of the Service. The venue has small outdoor areas located to the front, side and rear of the 2 Royal Avenue Building.

3.2 A site plan is attached as Appendix 2.

3.3 The days and hours proposed to provide entertainment within the outdoor areas are:

- Monday to Sunday from 10.00am to 11.00pm

3.4 The proposed outdoor area measures approximately 115 square metres and therefore the maximum occupancy will be in the region of 200 people. The exact figure will be determined when the site layout for a particular event is agreed.

3.5 Members are reminded that all applications for the grant of Outdoor Entertainments Licences must be brought before Committee for consideration.

Representations

3.6 Public notice of the application has been placed and no written representation has been lodged as a result of the advertisement.

PSNI

3.7 The Police Service of Northern Ireland have been consulted in relation to the application and have confirmed that they have no objection to the application.

3.8 A copy of their response is included as appendix 3 to this report.

NIFRS

- 3.9 The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service have been consulted in relation to the outdoor application and have confirmed that they have no objection to the application.

Health, safety and welfare

- 3.10 Officers from the Service will engage with the applicant in the lead up to events to ensure all documentation and technical information is in place.
- 3.11 Additionally, officers will inspect the site during the build of any event space and following its completion to ensure they are satisfied all safety and management procedures are in place.

Noise

- 3.12 The applicant will be required to provide a Noise Management Plan for events which will be provided to the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) for evaluation. Council Officers work with the Licensee in order to assess the noise that may be generated from the event and to minimise the potential for noise disturbance.
- 3.13 Members will recognise that noise generated by outdoor entertainment is likely to lead to some level of disturbance for those in the vicinity of the venue. Even if guideline levels are met there is no guarantee that complaints will not be received. Conversely, if a recommended level is exceeded this may not necessarily lead to complaints as people may be prepared to tolerate the event because it will only last for a limited period of time.

Applicant

- 3.14 The applicant, and/or their representative will be available at your meeting to answer any queries you may have in relation to the application.

4.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.1 None.

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

5.1 There are no issues associated with this report.”

The Committee granted approval to the application for a 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence as outlined in paragraph 3.3 of the report.

**Application for the Grant of a 7-Day Annual Outdoor
Entertainments Licence for the Belfast Stories Site,
92-100 Royal Avenue**

The Building Control Manager presented the following report to the Committee, highlighting that the application was also from the Council:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To consider an application for the grant of a 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence based on the Council’s standard conditions, to provide outdoor musical entertainment for:

<u>Area and Location</u>	<u>Ref. No.</u>	<u>Applicant</u>
The Belfast Stories Site 92 – 100 Royal Avenue, Belfast, BT1 3HH	WK/2022/02876	Wendy Langham Programme Director, Belfast Stories Place and Economy Department Belfast City Council, No. 9 Adelaide, 9-21 Adelaide Street, Belfast BT2 8DJ

1.2 A location map is attached as Appendix 1

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Taking into account the information presented and any representations made in respect of the application you are required to make a decision to either:

- a) Approve the application for the grant of the 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence in the proposed area as requested, or
- b) Approve the application for the grant with special conditions, or
- c) Refuse the application for the grant of the 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence.

2.2 If an application is refused, or special conditions are attached to the licence to which the applicant does not consent, then the applicant may appeal the Council's decision within 21 days of notification of that decision to the County Court. In the case that the applicant subsequently decides to appeal, outdoor entertainment may not be provided until any such appeal is determined.

3.0 **Main report**

Key Issues

3.1 The applicant has applied to provide musical events, within an outdoor area. The details of the proposed events are unknown at this stage. However, if an event is planned to take place on this site it would be subject to all technical matters being implemented to the satisfaction of the Service. The outdoor area is located to the rear of the Belfast Stories Building and is bounded by Union Street, Kent Street and North Street. A site plan is attached as Appendix 2.

3.2 The days and hours proposed to provide entertainment in the outdoor area are:

- Monday to Saturday 11.30am to 11.00pm, and
- Sunday 12.30pm to 11.00pm.

3.3 The area of the proposed outdoor area is approximately 3,228 square metres and therefore the maximum occupancy will be in the region of 6000 people. The exact figure will be determined when the site layout for a particular event is agreed.

3.4 Members are reminded that all applications for the grant of Outdoor Entertainments Licences must be brought before Committee for consideration.

Representations

3.6 Public notice of the application has been placed and no written representation has been lodged as a result of the advertisement.

PSNI

3.6 The Police Service of Northern Ireland have been consulted in relation to the application and have confirmed that they have no objection to the application.

- 3.7 A copy of their response is included as appendix 3 to this report.

NIFRS

- 3.8 The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service have been consulted in relation to the outdoor application and have confirmed that they have no objection to the application.

Health, safety and welfare

- 3.9 Officers from the Service will engage with the applicant and event organisers in the lead up to events to ensure all documentation and technical information is in place.
- 3.10 Additionally, officers will inspect the site during the build of the event space and following its completion to ensure they are satisfied all appropriate safety and management procedures are in place.

Noise

- 3.11 The applicant will be required to provide a Noise Management Plan for events which will be provided to the Environmental Protection Unit (EPU) for evaluation. Council Officers work with the promoter to assess the noise that may be generated from the event and to minimise the potential for noise disturbance.
- 3.12 Members will recognise that noise generated by outdoor concerts is likely to lead to some level of disturbance for local residents. Even if guideline levels are met there is no guarantee that complaints will not be received. Conversely, if a recommended level is exceeded this may not necessarily lead to complaints as people may be prepared to tolerate the event because it will only last for a limited period of time.

Applicant

- 3.13 The applicant, and/or their representative will be available at your meeting to answer any queries you may have in relation to the application.

4.0 **Financial and Resource Implications**

- 4.1 None.

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

5.1 There are no issues associated with this report.”

The Committee granted approval to the application for a 7-Day Annual Outdoor Entertainments Licence as outlined in paragraph 3.2 of the report.

Designation of New Street Trading Sites

The Building Control Manager informed the Members that under the provisions of the Street Trading Act (NI) 2001 a district council had powers to designate and rescind the designation of specific streets or parts of streets as being suitable for street trading. The Act also allowed a council to vary a previous designating resolution in relation to the commodities or services to be supplied in specific streets. He explained that, if a street or the commodity to be offered had not been designated under the Act, the Council could not issue a licence for street trading from a stationary position in that street. The process of considering and reviewing the designation of streets was therefore an essential part of the legal framework within which the Council was enabled to regulate street trading in the City.

The Building Control Manager advised the Members that the Act set down the procedures which must be followed in considering a designating resolution, including the types of trading which may or may not take place in that street. The main steps the Council must undertake were summarised as follows:

- a) Give public notice of the proposed resolution;
- b) Consult with the PSNI and the Department for Infrastructure and other persons it considered appropriate;
- c) Consider any representations relating to the proposed resolution which it had received;
- d) After the Council had considered those representations it may, if it thought, pass the designating resolution; and
- e) Publish notice of the outcome for 2 consecutive weeks in 2 or more newspapers, giving not less than 28 days between the date of the publication and the date set out by the Council when the resolution would come into effect.

The Building Control Manager advised that a further report would be brought before the Committee at a future meeting detailing the outcome of the process of consultation. He added that, at that stage, Members would be able to determine the designation of the street along with any restriction on the commodity to be sold and any recommendations regarding the restriction on the times of trading.

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 17th January, 2024**

Proposed Sites

Location	Proposed Commodities/Services
Queen's Quay (4 sites)	Commodities to be determined
Cromac Place (1 site)	Hot and cold non-alcoholic beverages, confectionery, hot and cold food, or similar commodities.

The Committee considered the applications that had been received for the creation of new designated sites and approved:

- The publication of the statutory 28-day notice of the proposed resolution; and
- To commence consultation with statutory bodies and other persons who may have an interest in the proposals.

Non-Delegated Matters

Update on further Pavement Café Engagement

The Building Control Manager reminded the Committee that, at its meeting on 13th December, 2023, it had agreed to the implementation of a permanent pavement café licensing scheme, subject to officers continuing to engage with Guide Dogs NI, the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) and the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (Imtac) in relation to concerns which they had raised during the public consultation, in order that the guidance for the scheme would reflect best practice. The Committee had also agreed that those three organisations be invited to attend the next meeting to outline any concerns which they had.

The Committee was advised that, since the December Committee meeting, officers had met with all three groups to discuss their concerns and that those discussions had proved beneficial. The Building Control Manager outlined that officers would continue to engage with the groups over the coming weeks as the scheme got underway.

The Members were advised that officers had provided the groups with an update on the guidance document and on proposed Licence Conditions, which would address some of the concerns raised by Imtac and Guide Dogs NI, in particular regarding pavement cafes not spreading out to take up more space than approved and to allow for the safe passing of pedestrians.

It was reported that it was discussed that DFI Roads was currently working and engaging with Councils and representatives of disability groups on a Northern Ireland wide guidance document to assist DFI staff, Councils and stakeholders in assessing pavement café licence applications in relation to highway considerations. The Committee was advised that the guidance dealt primarily with the unobstructed footway widths adjacent to pavement cafes on public pavements, the siting of furniture, lighting and enclosures. The Building Control Manager confirmed that it was the Council's intention

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 17th January, 2024**

that any finalised technical guidance document produced by DFI would become or be incorporated into the Council's technical guidance.

The Members were advised that both Imtac and Guide Dogs NI wanted the Council guidance to specify a minimum of 2 metres unobstructed footway width. The Building Control Manager explained that the Belfast guidance document for temporary pavement cafes contained a minimum pavement width of 2 metres clearance, with a reduction to 1.5 metres in constrained environments. He advised the Committee that it was the intention that that wording be part of the Belfast guidance until the finalised DFI guidance was produced. It was also agreed that in some areas of high footfall, such as pedestrianised areas and near bus stops, that a minimum of 2 metres would not be sufficient and that would be made clear in the Belfast guidance until the final DFI guidance was available.

Imtac had also raised concerns about tactile paving, or the approach to it, being obstructed. Officers had previously raised the issue with DFI and it would be incorporated into Belfast guidance until the finalised DFI guidance was available. Concerns in relation to the preferred means of enclosure of pavement cafes was also raised and further consideration would take place in relation to that issue.

The Federation of Small Businesses had raised concerns regarding the timing of the consultation and the transition period. The Building Control Manager outlined that officers had informed FSB that all licensees had been contacted following the December meeting of the Licensing Committee and had been provided with information about the permanent scheme and the 4 month implementation period. Officers had also visited almost 90 unlicensed operators to date, to discuss the scheme and that engagement would continue.

The FSB had been reassured by officers that the Council would not require existing pavement cafes to cease operating during the transition period and that any enforcement action would be graduated and proportional going forward.

The Members were advised that an information seminar had been arranged in the City Hall on 15th February for businesses to attend and learn about the scheme and the requirements for applying. Imtac and Guide Dogs NI had been invited to speak at the event to give attendees an overview of the difficulties faced by people with disabilities and the importance of certain design features in relation to pavement cafes.

Furthermore, the Building Control Manager advised the Committee that Imtac and Guide Dogs NI had offered to undertake walkabouts in the City Centre with the officers who would be dealing with pavement café applications, to give an insight into the needs of people with various disabilities.

The Committee was advised that officers were continuing to engage with DFI Roads and would be attending a consultation meeting later that month, convened by the Department, concerning its draft NI wide guidance.

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 17th January, 2024**

The Committee was advised that a representative from Guide Dogs NI had advised that he could no longer attend the meeting and his written submission was circulated to the Members of the Committee.

In response to a member's question, the Building Control Manager advised the Committee that, while enforcement action had not been taken against businesses under the temporary scheme, appropriate action would be taken against businesses who failed to comply with the terms of the permanent scheme. He added that, more often than not, businesses worked with the Council to reach a satisfactory outcome to any such complaints.

In response to a further Member's question regarding the likely timeframe for the publication of the DFI Roads guidance on Pavement Cafes, the Building Control manager stated that the guidance was due to have been produced in 2016 and that he did not foresee it being finalised anytime soon.

The City Solicitor confirmed to the Committee that there was no onus on the Council to wait for the statutory guidance from the Department of Infrastructure and that such guidance regularly followed legislation.

A number of further Members stated that it was important that the Council would proceed with its scheme in the absence of the DFI guidance, given the substantive work which had been carried out by officers.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. N. Hutcheson, Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) to the meeting. He thanked the officers for their work on the scheme to date and he explained that he appreciated that it was not always easy to balance the social, accessibility and economic sides of such a policy. He advised the Committee that while the FSB wanted to see a permanent scheme introduced, the compressed timescales had been challenging for small businesses and the time of year that the consultation had been carried out had not been ideal.

However, he welcomed the Committee's decision to extend the transition period to the end of April 2024. He stated that FSB felt that the Council should have waited for the DFI guidance to be released in order to avoid a situation where a business, having gained a licence for a pavement café, might then have to change aspects if the DFI guidance was to differ. He welcomed the assurances that officers had provided in relation to continued engagement in relation to the scheme and that any changes that were deemed necessary as time went on would not be sudden.

He suggested that a time-bound reference group be established for three to six months, comprising key stakeholders and officers, to ensure a smooth transition. Furthermore he suggested that press releases and social media be used to highlight that a regime change was taking place in respect of pavement cafes. He stated that it was important that officers would continue to reach out to those businesses which were operating unlicensed pavement cafes. He added that it would be useful if the Council could publish data in relation to the number of applications made to the scheme and the reasons why any applications had been refused in order to take stock.

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 17th January, 2024**

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Hutcheson for his presentation.

The Building Control Manager confirmed to the Committee that a press release was being prepared to ensure that businesses were aware of the scheme and that there was no issue with establishing a time-bound reference group to continue the engagement with the key stakeholders as Mr. Hutcheson had suggested. He also stated that officers were continuing to try to speak with all unlicensed pavement café owners.

In response to a Member's question, the Building Control Manager explained that the guidance document would be a "live" document and would be subject to change. He confirmed that the two metre clearance would be the default position but that some discretion would need to be used in certain cases, for example, where there was not quite 2 metres clearance available to a premises. He added that the Council's guidance could, in fact, be more stringent than the guidance that DFI produce.

The Chairperson then welcomed Mr. B. Bailie and Mr. M. Lorimer, representing the Inclusive Mobility and Transport Advisory Committee (Imtac), to the meeting. Mr. Bailie thanked the officers for their continued engagement with them to date. He stated that footways were for the safe and efficient movement of people, separate from traffic, and that was what made towns, city centres and the public realm attractive for everyone, without fears for safety or wellbeing. He added that Imtac wished to see a consistent approach across all Council areas.

Mr. Lorimer advised the Members that the footway width was the biggest concern, and that two metres clearance should be the minimum. He stated that a scheme which proposed to deliberately reduce footway widths was not consistent with Inclusive Streets, nor did it comply with statutory equality duties on public bodies in Northern Ireland.

He added that there was a recognition that greater widths were required in areas of higher footfall and that they would require further information as to when that would apply, and by how much.

He explained that they also wished to see the continuous enclosure of pavement cafes, not just two sides, in order that they were accessible to all users.

He stated that a full Equality Impact Assessment would be called for at some point in relation to DFI or Council guidance, as reducing footway widths had a clear detrimental impact on disabled people, older people and those with dependents.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives from Imtac for their presentation.

At the request of a Member, the Committee agreed that a representative from the Department for Infrastructure be invited to attend the next meeting in order to provide an update on the Department's draft guidance for Pavement Cafés.

The Committee further noted the contents of the report and the continuing engagement which officers were undertaking with Imtac, Guide Dogs NI and the Federation of Small Businesses NI.

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

The Committee agreed the following Standard Conditions of Licence which would be attached to licences issued under the Licensing of Pavement Cafes Act (NI) 2014:

1. The Licensee shall be responsible at all times for compliance with the terms and conditions of the Pavement Café Licence.
2. The licensed area must only be used to place temporary furniture for the purpose of consuming food and/or drink supplied from the licence holder's premises.
3. The Licensee shall at all times ensure that the pavement café furniture is not placed outside the licensed area.
4. The pavement café area shall not exceed the approved dimensions and shall be clearly demarcated by way of barriers, if required, as per the approved plan attached to the licence.
5. The Licensee must ensure that clear routes along the footway/highway are maintained, considering the needs of disabled people, and that minimum footway widths and distances required for access by mobility impaired and visually impaired persons (as per the approved plan attached to the licence) are provided at all times when the licence is in operation.
6. Only furniture permitted by the Council shall be used in the licensed area and such furniture shall be placed in accordance with the approved plan attached to the licence.
7. All tables and chairs and other authorised furniture and barriers used in conjunction with a pavement café licence must be removeable which means that it is not a permanent fixed structure, and it is able to be moved easily (that is sufficiently portable so that it can be removed within 20 minutes) and stored away at the end of use for the day.
8. The Licensee shall only place furniture on the licensed area on those days and during those hours as permitted by the licence.
9. Any furniture provided in the licensed area shall not mark or damage the surface of the pavement.
10. Adequate storage approved in writing by the Council must be provided to ensure that furniture can be stored securely when the premises are closed.

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 17th January, 2024**

11. The Licensee must ensure staff regularly monitor the licensed area, and the area immediately adjacent to it, to ensure it is kept clean, tidy and litter free. Any litter or waste arising from use of the licensed area must be cleared away as soon as is practicable.
12. The Licensee shall ensure that adequate Public Liability insurance cover is in force to cover the licensed area and provide proof of that insurance upon demand by the Council.
13. The Licensee shall ensure good order is maintained during all times the Pavement Café is open.
14. The Licensee shall ensure that the pavement café is operated in a manner ensuring that there is no safety risk, nuisance, public health issue or detriment to amenity caused to other users of the highway or nearby premises.
15. This licence does not in any way permit the playing of live or recorded music for the entertainment of customers in the licensed area.
16. The Licensee will comply with any reasonable request from a duly authorised officer of the Council to remove such furniture and barriers from the licensed area as is necessary to facilitate the safety of the public, including the safe movement of vehicles, during special events. Licensees will be notified of any such special events at least 14 calendar days before the event where possible.
17. Furniture shall be removed by the Licensee when reasonably required by the Council, the PSNI, emergency services or any statutory undertaker or utility provider.
18. A pavement licence is granted subject to the preceding standard conditions. However, the Council reserves the right to add additional conditions to individual licences where it is reasonable and appropriate to do so.

Special Events

A special event includes, but is not restricted to, an event such as a rally, procession, marathon or other sporting event or an open-air concert.

**Response from the British Board of Film
Classification (BBFC) regarding a proposed 15A rating**

The Committee noted the response which had been received from the British Board of Film Classification (BBFC), whereby it had confirmed that there had been no wide expression of support for a new film rating of “15A” and, indeed, the only requests for such a rating had been from Belfast City Council.

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 17th January, 2024**

The letter stated that the BBFC had carried out research to gauge the appetite for a new “15A” rating but that the Advisory Panel on Children’s Viewing had been unanimous of its view that a “15A” rating would represent a significant child protection risk. The BBFC advised that it carried out a large-scale public consultation on its Classification Guidelines every 4-5 years and that the most recent consultation was currently in its final stages, with the results being published early in 2024.

Noted.

Licence Fees for Sex Establishments

The Building Control Manager reminded the Committee that after reviewing the current fees, as agreed by Committee in November 2022, these were deemed to be proportionate to the cost of the processes associated with administering a Sex Establishment Licence.

It was therefore proposed that the fees set previously remain as shown below.

Application Fee	£3,200
Renewal Fee	£1,430
Transfer Fee	£1,125
Licence Fee	£500

The Sex Establishment Licence fees would ensure the cost of the operational and administration processes were proportionate to the licensing scheme.

The Committee agreed that the current fees, reviewed in November 2022, remain unchanged.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

Tuesday, 16th January, 2024

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

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

Also present: Councillor Flynn.

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

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 12th December, 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 8th January, 2024, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Alderman Lawlor declared an interest in relation to item 9f on the agenda, LA04/2023/4021/F - Change of use from dwelling to 5. Bed House in Multiple Occupation (amended description) - 166 Upper Newtownards Road, in that an objection letter had been submitted by his employer, Mr. G. Robinson MLA.

Committee Site Visits

Note of Committee Site Visits

The Committee noted the Committee site visits.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

Schedule of Committee Site Visits – 2024

The Committee agreed to the schedule of Committee site visits.

**Notifications of Provision/Removal
of Accessible Parking Bays**

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

- Provision of 152 Locksley Park;
- Provision of 33 Pacific Avenue; and
- Provision of 103 Bloomfield Avenue.

**Notifications from Statutory Bodies:
Abandonment and Extinguishment**

**Abandonment at Botanic Avenue and
Donegall Pass and at Marcus Ward Street**

The Committee noted the proposed abandonments.

Appeals

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions Issued

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

Miscellaneous Reports

**Pilot for notification of Conservation Area
Consent (DCA) Applications**

The Planning Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the pilot for amending the process for notifying Conservation Area Consent applications to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI).

He explained that the pilot intended to reduce the number of such applications that the Council was required to notify to DfI and therefore reduce administrative processes.

The Committee noted the report.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

**THE COMMITTEE DEALT WITH THE FOLLOWING ITEMS IN PURSUANCE OF THE
POWERS DELEGATED TO IT BY THE COUNCIL UNDER STANDING ORDER 37(e)**

Previously considered Planning Applications

LA04/2023/2668/F - Demolition of existing buildings and the erection of an affordable housing development comprising of 69 No. units with a mix of apartments and townhouses, including an ancillary community hub and offices, car parking, landscaping and all associated site and access works (amended description). - Lands bound by Pilot Street, Short Street, the rear of nos. 11-29 Garmoyle Street and, the rear of Nos. 63 and 65a Dock Street and No. 123 Corporation Street

The Planning Manager reported that a Committee site visit had taken place on 10th January, following the Committee's deferral at its meeting in December, 2023. He outlined the application to the Committee and outlined the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of housing in this location;
- Housing density;
- Affordable housing;
- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Design and placemaking;
- Public realm;
- Impact on heritage assets;
- Climate change;
- Residential quality and impact on amenity;
- Open space;
- Access and transport;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Waste management;
- Natural heritage;
- Employability and Skills;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-application Community Consultation.

He highlighted that the area was comprised of a mix of residential, commercial and leisure uses and was a sustainable location for new housing that would support the regeneration of the area.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

He explained that the scheme would provide 52 off-site affordable housing units for the Build to Rent scheme at City Quays 4 and would require 14 affordable units, a total of 66 affordable homes. He added that the social housing scheme was supported by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive due to significant unmet need.

The Planning Manager stated that the design of the scheme was considered to be of good quality and in keeping with the locality and that the 1.3 metre raised finished floor levels were acceptable, on balance, having regard to the specific design, context and support from DfI Rivers.

He reported that Environmental Health had offered no objections, subject to conditions in relation to contamination, noise, final construction environmental management plan and an updated air quality assessment. He added that the Council's City Regeneration and Development Unit welcomed the proposal but had raised concerns with regard to mixed tenure approaches to ensure access for all to good quality accommodation that would meet the needs of different ages, genders and abilities.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission would be granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. M. Gordon and Mr P. Stinson from Turley, and Mr. H. McConnell, Project Architect, RPP Architects to the meeting.

Mr. Stinson explained that he welcomed the recommendation to approve the application. He stated that no consultees had offered any objection to the development following an extensive pre-application process that explored the principle of an affordable housing development to support the City Quays Regeneration Project.

He stated that part of the Pilot Street site formed part of the City Quays Masterplan which had outline planning permission and extended the redevelopment potential beyond the immediate waterfront area to integrate with Sailortown and bring two vacant sites into use.

He stated that the development would deliver 69 units and provide a mix of family homes that was directly informed by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive which supported the development in the location as it would meet an acute and pressing need for affordable housing.

He explained that the proposed density was appropriate to the highly sustainable location, in accordance with the Plan Strategy, and made good use of brownfield land. He added that Belfast Harbour had worked proactively with officers throughout the application process to ensure the development would respond positively to its context and addressed concerns which had been raised by local residents from Garmoyle Street.

Mr. Stinson explained that the loss of two homes along the shared boundary with Garmoyle Street had removed the impact on existing residents and allowed for the integration of a communal garden space and meant that future residents would be able to avail of new recreational space within City Quays Gardens, a transformative green space that would be delivered by Belfast Harbour, a short walk from the site.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

He concluded by stating that the development was supported by green travel measures, promoted within the Travel Plan, to reduce the reliance on the private car and that DfI Roads had no objection to the development.

The Committee approved the application, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement and deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

LA04/2023/2388/F - Residential development comprising 256no. units, public realm, and associated access and site works. - Lands immediately north of Cross Harbour Bridge, East of Donegall Quay and south of AC Marriott Hotel, City Quays

The Planning Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the application for the erection of a 23-storey tower with lower 12 storey element, comprising 254 Build To Rent apartments.

He outlined the following key issues for consideration of the application:

- Principle of housing in this location;
- Housing density;
- Affordable housing;
- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Design and placemaking;
- Public realm;
- Impact on heritage assets;
- Climate change;
- Residential quality and impact on amenity;
- Open space;
- Access and transport;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental protection;
- Flood risk and drainage;
- Waste-water infrastructure;
- Waste management;
- Natural heritage;
- Employability and Skills;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-application Community Consultation.

He explained that the site was a suitable location for housing and the proposal would make effective use of previously developed land and support city centre living. He stated that the height, scale and massing of the proposed building was considered in keeping with other

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

tall buildings in City Quays and the wider area, including the slightly higher Obel Tower, situated to the south of the proposal.

He reported that the proposal would provide no dedicated parking, however, it was considered acceptable given the highly sustainable location of the site, travel plan and commitment to green travel measures.

The Planning Manager stated that application proposed the delivery of social housing at an alternative location at Pilot Street, which was supported by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

He stated that, having regard to the Development Plan and material considerations, it was recommended that planning permission was granted, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. P. Stinson, Turley and Mr. H. McConnell, RPP Architects, to the meeting.

Mr. Stinson stated that he welcomed the recommendation to approve the application which was a joint application for affordable housing at Pilot Street and jointly, would deliver 325 homes, supporting the Council's growth plans for city centre living.

He explained that Belfast Harbour had been delivering on its masterplan since it was granted outline planning permission in 2014 to reimagine and revitalise the Belfast waterfront with the aim of connecting the harbour with the city centre and to deliver a regeneration project that would see the area as a place to work and live.

He stated that residential accommodation was a key part of the masterplan to bring vibrancy to the area and complement existing office and hotel accommodation. He added that the application was supported by a Section 76 Planning agreement to secure the delivery of the Pilot Street development, green travel measures and the implementation of a Construction Employability and Skills Plan.

He concluded by stating that City Quays 4 was a key part of Belfast Harbour's vision for City Quays and would complete the waterfront with an iconic building that was appropriately designed for its location and sympathetic and complementary to its neighbours.

The Committee approved the application, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement, and resolving the outstanding transport and children's play equipment requirements, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement and deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

LA04/2021/2016/F - Demolition of existing multi-storey car park and the erection of 298no. build for rent apartments (19 storey) including ground floor commercial unit (A1/A2), car/cycle parking provision along with associated development. (Further information received) - 21-29 Corporation Street and 18-24 Tomb Street

The Senior Planning Officer updated the Committee on the background of the application and the updated policy context since the adoption of the Belfast Local Development Plan: Plan Strategy 2035 in May, 2023.

She provided an overview of the application and explained the following key considerations:

- Consultation responses;
- Strategic policies;
- Principle of housing;
- Housing density;
- Affordable housing;
- Housing mix;
- Place making;
- Health impacts;
- Climate change;
- Amenity provision;
- Access and parking; and
- Environmental impacts.

She stated that the non-provision of adaptable and accessible units and 9.9 sqm average amenity space were justified, having regard to the other considerations that included the significant regeneration benefits and proximity to the waterfront and city centre amenities.

She reported that it was recommended that the application was approved, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. C. Shanks, Managing Director at Clyde Shanks, Mr. G. Mitchell, MRP, Mr. R. Ditty, CBRE and Mr. J. Mulholland, Todd Architects to the meeting.

The information contained in the deputation and discussion associated with the item is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

The representatives, appearing on behalf of the applicant, explained to the Committee the benefits of the proposed development and invited the Committee to approve the application.

During discussion, it was acknowledged that the Section 76 planning agreement would require the submission of a further viability appraisal to the Council prior to the commencement of development to examine the ability of the approved development to provide affordable housing, and that the viability appraisal would be required prior to commencement and that this would also be subject to Committee approval.

The Chairperson put the officer recommendation to the Committee and upon audible dissent, called for a vote, fifteen Members voted for the recommendation and four against and it was declared carried.

Accordingly, the Committee approved the application, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement to include the provision in relation to the updated viability appraisal, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement and deal with any other matters that might arise, provided that they were not substantive.

New Planning Applications

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

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and explained the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of development;
- Housing density;
- Affordable housing;
- Housing mix;
- Adaptable and accessible accommodation;
- Climate change;
- Impact on the character and appearance of the area;
- Heritage impacts;
- Residential quality and impact on amenity;
- Access and transport;
- Other environmental impacts;
- Developer Contributions; and
- Pre-application Community Consultation.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

He reported that there had been no objections from statutory consultees and that the Planning Service's Plans and Policy Unit had raised concern with the proposal's non-compliance with Policies HOU5 (affordable housing) and HOU6 (housing mix).

He explained that viability was a material consideration and that viability assessments demonstrated that the application was not viable with affordable housing, however, the non-provision was justified, having regard to other material considerations that included the significant regeneration benefits.

He stated that the Section 76 planning agreement shall require that a further viability appraisal to be submitted to the Council prior to the commencement of development to examine the ability of the approved development to provide affordable housing.

He concluded by stating that the application was recommended for approval, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement.

The information contained in the deputation and discussion associated with the item is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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

The representatives, appearing on behalf of the applicant, explained to the Committee the benefits of the proposed development and invited the Committee to approve the application.

During discussion, it was acknowledged that the Section 76 planning agreement would require the submission of a further viability appraisal to the Council prior to the commencement of development to examine the ability of the approved development to provide affordable housing, and that the viability appraisal would be required prior to commencement and that this would also be subject to Committee approval.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Maskey,
Seconded by Councillor Carson,

“That the Committee approves the application, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement to include the provision in relation to the updated viability appraisal, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and Section 76 planning agreement and deal with any other matters that might arise.”

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

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

LA04/2023/2418/F - Demolition of existing retail units and vehicle drop off area of 215-225 Castlereagh Road, Belfast and erection of 4 storey apartment building containing, 16 no apartments with associated development and ancillary works. - 215 - 225 Castlereagh Road

The Committee deferred consideration of the application in order that Members could undertake a site visit.

LA04/2021/1531/F - Construction of 3 No. apartment blocks consisting of 20 No. 2 bed apartments and 4 no. 3 bed apartments (Amended drawings) - 7 and 9 Ballygomartin Road

The Planning Manager explained that the application site was located on undesignated white land, in accordance with the BUAP and explained the key issues for consideration that included the principle of residential development and the impact of the proposal on the character of the area, residential amenity, parking, landscaping, sewage infrastructure and waste management.

He reported that there had been no objections from consultees and that 12 third party objections had been received in relation to character, design, residential amenity, bin stores, parking, loss of view and property values.

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

The Committee approved the application, subject to conditions and a Section 76 planning agreement, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions of conditions and deal with any other issues that might arise, provided that they were not substantive. The Section 76 planning agreement shall secure affordable housing, in accordance with Policy HOU5.

LA04/2023/4021/F - Change of use from dwelling to 5. Bed House in Multiple Occupation (amended description) - 166 Upper Newtownards Road

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and highlighted the following key issues:

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

- The principle of an HMO at this location;
- Impact on surrounding residential amenity/character including policy analysis;
- Traffic, parking and access;
- Waste and refuse collection;
- Over-occupation/anti-social behaviour; and
- Climate change.

She reported that no consultees had offered any objection to the application, however, 22 third-party objections had been received and that the concerns raised had been considered.

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

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Flynn to the meeting. Councillor Flynn asked the Committee to refuse the application as it would provide a potential for many additional cars to the area in which on street parking was already at a premium and that it would be detrimental to residential amenity along Oakland Avenue.

He explained that navigation of the footpaths in the area had already been an issue in the area due to the current levels of on street parking.

He stated that there was no provision of adequate waste storage space and that the consultation response alluded to the applicant providing additional waste collection as only three bins would be provided. He stated further that additional or larger bins would need to be provided and stored to the rear of the property which was already saturated with parked cars and bins and would create additional damage to the residential amenity.

The Chairperson thanked Councillor Flynn for his contribution.

The Chairperson welcomed the Applicants, Ms F. Rogers and Ms. L. Rogers, and Mr. A. Larkin from Gravis Planning to the meeting.

Mr. Larkin informed the Committee that the applicants operated seven HMO properties across Belfast which focused on accommodating young professionals and that all of the properties were licensed and, as operators, they had an excellent relationship with adjoining neighbours and the Council's HMO licensing authority.

He stated that the applicants concurred with the recommendation to approve the application and that the property was located in a part of the Upper Newtownards Road which had been specifically designated for HMO development in the Plan Strategy due to the excellent public transport linkages and access to employment opportunities and services.

He addressed concerns which had been raised with regards to parking, bins and refuse, and antisocial behaviour.

He concluded by stating that the property was located in a central location that was well served by public transport on a main arterial route. He stated that the proposed change

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

of use fully complied with planning policy and the applicant was a highly experienced HMO operator with an unblemished record who understood the need to maintain good neighbourly relations and protect residential amenity.

A Member raised concerns with regard to the introduction of an HMO property into a residential area that would result in traditional family housing and associated parking requirements.

Proposal

Moved by Alderman McCullough,
Seconded by Councillor Douglas and

Resolved - "That the Committee agrees to defer consideration of the application in order that it can undertake a site visit and invite DfI Roads to attend a future meeting when the application will be considered."

LA04/2023/4093/F - Raise ridge to accommodate dormer to side elevation and fenestrational changes to front and rear elevation and 2x skylights - 5 Squires Hill Road

The Committee considered the report and approved the application, subject to conditions, and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with any other matters that may arise.

LA04/2023/3888/F - Proposed two year extension to planning approval LA04/2021/1707/F for an Active Travel Hub Comprising 2no. Shipping Containers. - Cathedral Gardens

The Senior Planning Officer outlined the application to the Committee and stated that the proposal was a temporary project which sought to increase active travel and push for modal shift to sustainable modes of transport.

She explained the key issues for consideration and stated that it was recommended that the application would be approved, subject to conditions.

The Committee considered the report and approved the application, subject to conditions, for a temporary two-year period and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions and deal with any other matters that arise prior to issuing the decision, provided that they were not substantive.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 16th January, 2024**

Restricted Item

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

Solace NI Update

The Director of Planning and Building Control updated the Committee on correspondence which had been exchanged as part of the Regional Planning Improvement Programme that related to the financial sustainability of the Planning system.

The Committee noted the content of the report.

Chairperson

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Planning Committee

Tuesday, 23rd January, 2024

REMOTE MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Garrett (Chairperson);
Alderman Lawlor;
Councillors Bell, Bradley, Brooks, P. Donnelly,
S. Douglas, Doran, Ferguson, Maskey and
Nic Bhranair.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported for Councillors Doherty and Groogan.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Restricted Items

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

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

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 and District Rate 2024/25

(Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance, attended in connection with this item).

The Committee considered a report in relation to the establishment of the District Rate and the compilation of the Estimates of Revenue Expenditure for the year 2024/2025.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 23rd January, 2024**

The Director of Finance outlined that the decision should not be subject to call-in as it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council and the public's interest in striking the district rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February, 2024.

He reported the cash limit for the Planning Committee for 2024/25 as recommended by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 19th January, 2024 and outlined the next steps in the rate setting process leading to the setting of the rate by Council at its meeting in February 2024.

Following consideration, the Committee noted the next steps in the rate setting process and:

- agreed a cash limit for the Planning Committee for 2024/25 of £2,344,219 and the individual service cash limits;
- noted the next steps in the rate setting process; and
- agreed that the decision would not be subject to call-in, given that it would cause unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February, 2024.

Chairperson

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 22nd January, 2024

MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE HELD IN HYBRID FORMAT

Members present: Councillor Bower (Chairperson); and
Councillors R. Brooks, Canavan, Cobain, Collins,
Duffy, Ferguson, Flynn, Gormley, Maghie, McAteer,
McCabe, McCann, McDowell, Nelson, Ó Néill and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. J. Greer, Director of Economic Development;
Ms. J. Corkey, Chief Executive, ICC Belfast
(Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.);
Mr. I. Bell, Director of Finance, Risk and Corporate
Services, ICC Belfast (Belfast Waterfront and Ulster
Hall Ltd.); and
Mrs. L McLornan, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 13th November, 2023, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 4th December.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Items

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

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

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

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
Monday, 22nd January, 2024

information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Performance Report for Quarter 2 Year To Date 2023/2024

The Chief Executive, ICC Belfast (BWUH Ltd), provided the Committee with an overview of the Company's performance during Quarter 2 Year to Date of the financial year 2023/2024, 1st April to 30th September 2023, and an analysis of actual performance against the budget.

The Committee was reminded that it was the eighth year of operation for the company. She outlined that the second quarter of 2023/24 had been reasonably busy but, as expected, had been much quieter than quarter one. This has been the case for both business and entertainment events.

The Members were advised that Customer satisfaction in post-event surveys had been extremely high, at 96% for entertainment and 100% for conferences.

The number of out-of-state delegate days and the estimated economic impact were also significantly higher than what had been targeted for the second quarter, albeit that the figures were lower on a cumulative basis for the year to date.

It was reported that the company's placement students and higher-level apprentices had gained valuable experience in events and marketing and entertainment and delivery. The Managing Director stated that their enthusiasm and fresh perspectives continued to invigorate the company and that they had demonstrated themselves as invaluable resources within the organisation.

She reported that their collaboration with Queen's University to develop a Technical Services Graduate Programme had also seen promising progress. The Committee was advised that two graduates, one female and one male, were currently contributing to the technical production department.

In relation to sustainability, she reported that the Green Team had met in June, July and August, to review the Sustainability Action Register and support sustainability initiatives throughout the organisation, including the recording of Carbon Emissions of events using the TRACE platform.

Solar film had been installed on glazed areas of the building which improved heat retention in winter and reduced solar gain in summer. The Committee was advised that it would reduce energy usage for air conditioning in the summer and reduce energy usage for heating in winter.

It was reported that improvements had been introduced to waste management processes, by segregating food waste, liquid waste and dry recycling waste supported by improved waste signage and infrastructure, such as liquid bins, to improve recycling rates and to reduce contamination of recyclable waste across the venues.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
Monday, 22nd January, 2024

The Committee was apprised of the current risks and opportunities for the company. The risks included the current economic outlook and inflation. The opportunities included the recent appointment of a Head of International Sales and recent Green Tourism Silver and Gold Awards, which drove the appeal of Belfast as a destination.

In response to a Member's query, the Director of Finance, Risk and Corporate Services advised the Committee that the company had set ambitious targets in relation to the occupancy rate for the Ulster Hall and that occupancy in Quarter 2 was always lower in comparison with Quarters 1 or 3.

The Committee noted the contents of the report.

Belfast Waterfront Ulster Hall Ltd:
Business Plan 2024/25

The Managing Director of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. (BWUH Ltd.) provided the Members with an overview of the key contents of the 2024/2025 Business Plan. She explained that it had been presented to and approved by the BWUH Ltd. Board of Directors in December 2023.

She outlined that BWUH Ltd, after welcoming a new Board in April 2023 and agreeing on its Board Strategy in May 2023, now presented a dynamic and ambitious five-year business plan. The plan aimed to deliver sustainable growth over the next five years and achieve operational excellence across its two business areas, Business Events and Entertainment Events.

The objectives included:

- doubling the conference revenue from £2.1million in 2023/2024 to £4.2M in 2028/2029;
- generating a cumulative economic impact of £120million by 2028/2029;
- honouring and celebrating the rich heritage of the Waterfront Hall and Ulster Hall, including investing in a community strategy to cultivate a sense of ownership among the local community; and
- reducing Council's subvention to £1.9million and generating a surplus for the business to reinvest, subject to agreement with the Council via the Service Level Agreement.

The Committee was provided with details of the growth strategy, the strategic pillars and a financial overview for 2024/2025.

The Managing Director provided an overview of proposed community outreach. A number of Members welcomed the ideas presented and suggested that contact be made with local sports teams and groups.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
Monday, 22nd January, 2024

After further discussion, the Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed the Business Plan for the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. for 2024/2025.

**Extending a BWUH Ltd Non-Executive
Director Contract to 18th February 2027**

The Committee agreed to an extension to the Non-Executive Director contract for Laura Jackson until 18th February, 2027.

Chairperson

Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 11th January, 2024

MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOТЕLY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

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

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Ms. B. Roddy, Project Support Officer – Climate; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Long.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 7th December, 2023 were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Retain: Sustain Programme and Short Film on Tracking Eco-Anxiety in the Wider Belfast Community

The Committee agreed that future presentations to the Committee should be scrutinised to ensure that they are accurate, in terms of both format and content, as listed on the Committee agenda. The Committee agreed also that where such presentations requested project funding, those projects should be costed and have been subjected to the completion of a comprehensive research and feasibility study, prior to consideration by the Committee.

Embodied Carbon – Reimagining Construction

The Committee agreed that the Director of Property and Projects be invited to a future meeting of the Committee in order to explore the possibility of the Council incorporating the calculation and publication of embedded carbon as part of its future infrastructure and capital programme projects.

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 11th January, 2024**

Passive House Standards

The Committee agreed that Passive House Standards be considered as a measure for future Council construction projects.

Notices of Motion - Quarterly Update

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy provided a quarterly update on the Notices of Motions with particular reference to the Notice of Motion and Issue Raised in Advance which were the remit of the Climate and City Resilience Committee.

The Committee noted the updates and agreed to the closure of to the Notice of Motion (ref 296) that Belfast should join C40 and the Issue Raised in Advance ref 339 requesting that Northern Ireland landmarks be included in the design of the proposed new Irish Passport.

The Director reported that requests to join C40 was unable to be accommodated owing to the fact that capacity had been reached. He stated that enquiries could be made in the future to seek membership of C40 when nomination places became available.

The Director reported that following a request from the Committee that the Department of Foreign Affairs consider including landmarks of Northern Ireland in the design of its proposed new Irish Passport, a response had been circulated to Members which had been received from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tánaiste.

The Committee agreed to the closure of both the Notice of Motion and Issue Raised in Advance.

Climate and Mitigation Dashboard

A Member requested an update on the progress made in regard to the implementation of a Climate and Mitigation Dashboard comprising a range of data pertaining to projects involving climate change and emission reduction measures.

In response, the Climate Commissioner reported that officers were engaged in the process of developing a dashboard for the Council, including a pilot project involving a range of wireless services as part of that process. She agreed to follow that up with an update to the Committee at a future meeting with the objective of extending the pilot to include a range of Council departments.

The Climate Commissioner confirmed that the Council would be undertaking a review of the Resilience and Sustainability Board and stated that there were thirty ambitions within the Resilience strategy. She reported that work going on across the city in terms of the Climate and Resilience Strategy had been amalgamated and that she would provide an update on the achievements during 2023, including the planned actions for 2024.

Noted.

Update on Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub

The Project Sponsor submitted the undernoted report on the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub.

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to note:

- i. the Retrofit Hub organised three roundtable events in November 2023 on retrofit of commercial and public buildings, creating customer demand, and potential funding approaches;**
- ii. the key takeaways included -**
 - a. the energy and carbon performance of commercial and public buildings is a key factor in protecting the value of the property and lease/rental incomes;**
 - b. demand for retrofit is driven largely by the availability of grants but is also affected by building regulations and the availability of trusted advice;**
- iii. that members highlighted the need for a strategic overview of Belfast’s built environment encompassing the market fundamentals as well as the need address retrofit / refurbishment, embodied carbon and the opportunity to develop a heat network in the city.**

3.0 Main Report

3.1 Background

At the Climate and City Resilience Committee meeting in November 2023 it was reported that the Retrofit Hub planned to run three roundtable events later that month to explore topics in greater depth. These included:

- 1. retrofit of commercial and public buildings,**
- 2. how to create customer demand for retrofit, and**
- 3. potential funding approaches.**

3.2 These were intended to inform three of the ten ‘work packages’ identified by members in earlier meetings:

1. Data and information
2. Co-ordination, learning and knowledge exchange.
3. Ensuring the just transition – checking for equality of opportunity
4. Pipeline development & funding options
5. Creating customer demand – Improving understanding, creating the market
6. Building energy performance assessment and monitoring
7. Supply chain development
8. Commercial sector
9. Local Area Energy Plan integration
10. Resilience assessment

3.3 Key findings of the events are summarised below:

Retrofitting of commercial and public buildings

Commercial and public buildings comprise a significant proportion of city centre property. Commercial tenants (especially for offices) are increasingly seeking to occupy buildings that are energy efficient with low operational emissions – hence the energy and carbon performance is a key factor in protecting the value of the property and in ensuring the marketability (and therefore income) of the property. This is driving down demand for older stock. The public sector is also a significant player accounting for an estimated 40% of occupied office space, with interests in letting and selling surplus stock.

3.4 With increasing legislation and customer expectations around energy efficiency standards, the commercial viability of both private and public office stock will increasingly be linked to the energy performance of the buildings. There is a significant lack of data on these buildings but categories of commercial/public property might include buildings:

- certified to environmental standards which are already optimising rental income
- currently at risk of not meeting market demands for energy performance, but for which a business case for improvement can be made; and
- which have no business case for improvement and are therefore at risk of becoming “stranded assets”.

3.5 It is likely there is a sizeable amount of stock particularly in the public sector that would be difficult to retrofit due to the location and the type of asset although this has not been assessed. Members highlighted the need for a strategic overview of Belfast’s built environment that encompasses the market fundamentals as

well as the need address retrofit / refurbishment, embodied carbon and the opportunity to develop a heat network in the city.

- 3.6 Research reflects a trend from commercial and public sector office use towards leisure and residential, with low carbon emissions as a critical factor. More work is required to assess the energy efficiency of commercial and public buildings, whether or not they can be retrofitted and how this might be funded. Financial models include spend to save investment, with suggestions of a city-wide model providing the scale of finance (likely to be in excess of £100M) that investors require.

Creating customer demand for low carbon retrofit

- 3.7 The most significant factor limiting investments in retrofit is the low availability of grants in Northern Ireland (compared to Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland) to support retrofit. This impacts not only the willingness of homeowners to invest but also deters suppliers from investing in developing the retrofit supply chain in Northern Ireland. While building regulations can also drive demand to a certain extent, these are minimum requirements and can only play a role when new building works are taking place. The mortgage will also increasingly drive the uptake of retrofit measures as banks will become increasingly reluctant to lend to F rated properties.
- 3.8 For households, as well as the upfront cost, the associated disruption and the level of bureaucracy are also key factors affecting willingness to retrofit. Most homeowners don't know where to start and which installers to use.
- 3.9 Provision of a trusted source of independent advice and support was identified as a key opportunity to unlock demand for retrofit. An impartial expert service is seen as important in terms of helping homeowners to decide what retrofit actions might be required, with guidance on potential impact, cost, funding options and priority. This would also support to households through the process of identifying contractors, managing works, post completion quality checks and optimising the benefits of works carried out. This in turn could benefit contractors by providing a type of 'trusted trader' assurance recognising those working to a high standard and ultimately generating additional business. Examples include a One-Stop Energy Store which was recently installed in the centre of Cork to provide advice and help support the development of energy communities as well as an end-to-end retrofit service being delivered by SSE.
- 3.10 There is a potential role for the voluntary sector in partnering with public and private sectors to support homeowners and tenants.

Fears of disruption and risk could be reduced by taking an area-based approach where households can see neighbours participating and benefitting, with practical support needed to minimise disruption to householders during any works.

**Pipeline development, funding options
and supply chain development**

- 3.11 Some public sector bodies (eg Queens University) have created invest to save schemes which have been successful in creating a revolving fund to improve the energy efficiency of buildings. Queens University have also invested in reducing scope 1 and 2 emissions from their suppliers in order to bring down their Scope 3 emissions.
- 3.12 The lack of data on the city's housing stock (eg housing type, whether houses have a cavity wall, tenure etc) is also a constraint. A survey could help to map the housing stock and identify the quick wins (eg cavity wall insulation) and potential area based projects. An area-based approach was agreed to be the most likely to succeed however it needs to reflect the priorities of residents which tend to centre around energy costs, comfort and lack of disruption. This would therefore require advance community development and engagement work as well as a commitment from NIHE, Housing Associations and private landlords (private landlords have indicated that they would be willing to invest up to two years rent in retrofit works). There also needs to be clear independent advice available to residents throughout the process.
- 3.13 Creative funding approaches were also explored for an area-based approach, including one from Living Places that combines some public funding, with long-term institutional investment and "outcome buying" finance. In future the EPC rating is likely to be a key factor in the availability of mortgages as lenders move towards carbon disclosure of their mortgage books.

Next steps

- 3.14 These findings will be incorporated into the Draft Retrofit Programme of work which is still under development with key actions agreed at the next hub meeting scheduled for 30th January.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

- 4.1 None.

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

5.1 Corporate policies will be followed, and appropriate screening and mitigating actions for individual work packages delivered where necessary.”

A Member referred to the success of the Ballymurphy cladding scheme, highlighting the benefits in terms of health outcomes, including providing families with more disposable income as a result of energy savings. He requested if there might be a role for the voluntary and community sector in the round table discussions.

A further Member referred to the potential employment opportunities in terms of retrofit and the need to develop the necessary skills to meet the retrofit programme

In response, the Climate Commissioner highlighted recruitment difficulties associated with the construction industry and the escalation in material costs as a disincentive in the retrofit of buildings. She referred specifically to the cost of retrofit and lack of government subsidies and grants as a disincentive for future investment.

A Member stated that she was aware of the problems associated with the current housing stock, both public and private, including the cost of retrofit. She stated her desire to see an expanded apprenticeship scheme and landlords encouraged to consider energy conservation a priority issue. The Member raised concerns that the increasing cost associated with retrofit might increase the level of dereliction across the city.

The Project Support Officer reported that there was a requirement to undertake a survey of the Council's building stock in terms of an assessment of the cost effectiveness of undertaking a comprehensive retrofit programme. She stated that in consultation with the construction industry they had stated that the demand needed to be evident before they would be prepared to invest in retrofit retraining and apprenticeship programmes.

Noted.

**Social Farms and Gardens - Request to
Present to Future Committee Meeting**

The Committee agreed to the request by Social Farms and Gardens to undertake a presentation to a future meeting of the Committee on the findings of their research.

**Response from The Minister of Foreign Affairs
re: New Irish Passport Design - for notation**

The Committee noted the response from the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tánaiste following the request by the Committee to include Northern Ireland landmarks in the design of the proposed new Irish Passport.

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 11th January, 2024**

Date of Next Meeting

The Committee agreed that its next meeting be held on Thursday, 8th February, 2024 at 5.15 p.m.

Chairperson

Standards and Business Committee

Tuesday, 23rd January, 2024

MEETING OF THE STANDARDS AND BUSINESS COMMITTEE

HELD IN THE LAVERY ROOM AND
REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillor McDonough-Brown (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Groogan;
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers; and
Councillors Bradley, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly, D. Douglas,
Duffy, Kelly, Lyons, Magee, Maghie, F. McAteer, G. McAteer,
McCormick, McDowell, R. McLaughlin and McMullan.

In attendance: Ms. N. Largey, Interim City Solicitor/Director of Legal
and Civic Services; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 4th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 8th January.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Motions

The City Solicitor informed the Committee that two motions had been received in advance of the Council on 1st February.

During discussion, she explained further the recommendation to refer the two motions to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

The Committee considered each motion in turn and noted the following:

**Standards and Business Committee,
Tuesday, 23rd January, 2024**

Transparency by Default Belfast City Council

That the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor McKeown and seconded by Councillor Lyons, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Rights-based Ethical Procurement Policy

That the motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Anglin and seconded by Councillor McCabe, be referred, in the first instance, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Chairperson