

Council

SPECIAL MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall and remotely via Microsoft Teams
on Monday, 5th August, 2024 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
The High Sheriff of Belfast, Councillor S. Douglas;
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black,
Bradley, T. Brooks, Bunting, Canavan, Carson, Collins,
de Faioite, Doherty, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly,
R. M. Donnelly, Doran, D. Douglas, Duffy, Ferguson,
Flynn, Garrett, Groogan, Hanvey, Lyons, Magee,
Maghie, Maskey, F. McAteer, G. McAteer, McDowell,
McKay, I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, Murphy,
Nelson, O'Neill, Smyth, Verner, Walsh and Whyte.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting were reported from the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick), Aldermen Copeland and McCoubrey and Councillors Bower, R. Brooks, Cobain, Kelly, Long, McCabe, McCann, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McKeown and Nic Bhranair.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Condolences

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, expressed his sincere condolences to the families and friends of the three girls who had been murdered in Southport.

Disorder within the City on 3rd August, 2024, and the attacks on minority owned businesses

The Council agreed to receive a deputation from Mr. A. Alloush and Mr M. Alterk, the owner and manager of a local shop.

Together they advised the Council that their shop on the Donegall Road had been set alight and destroyed on 3rd August. They explained that it was, in fact, the third time that the shop had been attacked and that it had been targeted solely because it was a Muslim-owned business. Mr. Alterk also stated that he had been attacked by a group of six masked men.

They criticised the PSNI response to the violence and queried what the police and political leaders were going to do about the ongoing attacks and violence against the Muslim community within the City.

The Lord Mayor thanked the speakers for their contribution and they retired from the meeting. He outlined that he was convening a group of affected business owners, community stakeholders and Council officers to determine how the Council could support them.

A number of Members thanked the deputation for attending and expressed their sympathy to them and to all those who had been affected by the violence, intimidation and criminal behaviour which had taken place in Belfast on Saturday, after an anti-immigration protest in the city centre.

Other Members condemned the violence and criminal behaviour which had taken place but stated that some people had genuine concerns regarding unregulated immigration and that they were entitled to peacefully protest.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor de Faoite,

“This council condemns the violent destruction and racist intimidation across the city, caused by far-right agitators on the streets of Belfast over the weekend.

We stand in solidarity with those in our minority ethnic communities across the city, who own and run businesses, contribute to our culture and identity in Belfast and make Belfast an open and welcoming place to live, work and study.

We reiterate our commitment to Belfast being a city of sanctuary for those fleeing war and persecution.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of the attack in Southport last week and their families, they deserve justice.

Those who would seek to exploit this tragic situation to suit their own malevolent ends do not speak for Belfast nor represent our city.”

Amendment

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

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

“that officers would submit a report to a future Special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, as soon as possible, to establish a programme of financial assistance for the business owners who were impacted by the racist, criminal attacks, following an anti-immigration protest on Saturday, 3rd August, 2024, with the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to have delegated authority in respect of the establishment of the fund.”

The Proposer of the original motion agreed to the addition of the paragraph.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That this Council welcomes and officially supports the United Against Racism rally, taking place in the City on Saturday, 10th August, 2024, and that it will use its social media to promote it.

On a vote by show of hands, thirty-two Members voted for the amendment and ten against and it was accordingly declared carried.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Doran,

That a report be submitted to a future meeting to consider a way in which those people who had concerns regarding immigration in the City could engage with the Council, in order to prevent future protests.

On a vote by show of hands, ten Members voted for the amendment and thirty-four against and it was accordingly declared lost.

After discussion, the following motion, standing in the name of Councillor Flynn, as amended by Councillor Beattie, was put and unanimously agreed:

“This council condemns the violent destruction and racist intimidation across the city, caused by far-right agitators on the streets of Belfast over the weekend.

We stand in solidarity with those in our minority ethnic communities across the city, who own and run businesses, contribute to our culture and identity in Belfast and make Belfast an open and welcoming place to live, work and study.

We reiterate our commitment to Belfast being a city of sanctuary for those fleeing war and persecution.

Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims of the attack in Southport last week and their families, they deserve justice.

Those who would seek to exploit this tragic situation to suit their own malevolent ends do not speak for Belfast nor represent our city.

Officers will submit a report to a future Special meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, as soon as possible, to establish a programme of financial assistance for the business owners who were impacted by the racist, criminal attacks, following an anti-immigration protest on Saturday, 3rd August, 2024, with the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee to have delegated authority in respect of the establishment of the fund.”

Lord Mayor
Chairperson