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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

31st January, 2025

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 hybrid format, both in the Council Chamber, City Hall, and remotely, via Microsoft teams on Monday, 3rd February, 2025 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 - 6)
5. Official Announcements
 - a) Request to address the Council

To consider a request from the from The Workers' Party to address the Council in relation to the granting of planning permission for a private hospital on Boucher Road.
6. Minutes of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee (Pages 7 - 58)
7. Minutes of the People and Communities Committee (Pages 59 - 64)
8. Minutes of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee (Pages 65 - 78)
9. Minutes of the Licensing Committee (Pages 79 - 82)
10. Minutes of the Planning Committee (Pages 83 - 94)
11. Minutes of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee (Pages 95 - 98)
12. Minutes of the Climate and City Resilience Committee (Pages 99 - 112)

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

John Walsh

Chief Executive

Council

MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the Council Chamber, City Hall,
on Thursday, 9th January, 2025 at 6.00 p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Lord Mayor, Councillor Murray (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick);
and Aldermen Lawlor, McCoubrey,
McCullough and Rodgers; and Councillors
Abernethy, Anglin, Beattie, Bell, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Brennan, 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, Groogan, Hanvey,
Kelly, Long, Lyons, Maghie, Maskey,
McAteer, McCabe, McCallin, McCann, McCusker,
McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay, McKeown,
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 were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Councillor Magee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Groogan, R-M Donnelly, Duffy and Verner declared an interest in the item "PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that they worked for organisations which had applied for funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate they were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillors McKeown and Smyth declared an interest in the item "Pitch Partnership Agreements" within the People and Communities Committee minutes, in that they had children who played for Rosario Football Club. As the item did not become the subject of debate they were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Lyons declared an interest in the item "Notice of Motion – Addressing Educational Inequalities in Belfast" within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that he worked for an Education Union. As the item did not become the subject of debate he was not required to leave the meeting.

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Councillor Doherty declared an interest in the item “Notice of Motions –Closures” within the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee minutes, in that he worked closely with the West Wellbeing charity, and he accordingly left the Chamber during the item when it arose in discussion.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Councillor Murray),
Seconded by The Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor McCormick) and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 2nd December, be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor welcomed Councillor McCallin to her first Council meeting and wished her well in her new role. He also paid tribute to former Councillor Nic Bhranair, who had recently stepped down from the Council.

He advised the Council of the recent retirement of Mr. Noel Munnis, Partnership Manager, and wished him well in his retirement.

He welcomed Dr. Adrian Johnston to the Council, who had recently taken up the post of Innovation Commissioner.

The Lord Mayor, along with several representatives of different political parties, paid tribute to the outgoing High Sheriff, Councillor Sammy Douglas and thanked him for his work throughout the year. Councillor Bunting advised the Council that he had recently received an award for his contribution to cross-community work in the City and that it was well deserved.

A number of Members congratulated the incoming High Sheriff, Councillor McAteer, who would be taking up the post in the coming weeks.

Councillor Sammy Douglas thanked the Council for the kind words and stated that he had thoroughly enjoyed his time as High Sheriff.

Alderman McCullough expressed his thanks to Mr. Davy McClean, who was stepping down as the leader of the Basement Youth Club in North Belfast, after dedicating the past 35 years to his community.

The Lord Mayor welcomed the progress which had been made with the design for a new stained glass, LGBT themed window which would soon be installed within the City Hall.

**Meeting of Council,
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Condolences

The Lord Mayor, together with representatives of several political parties, extended sympathy to Councillor Beattie on the passing of his father, Jack, before Christmas.

The Deputy Lord Mayor and a number of political representatives expressed condolences to the friends and family of the footballer, Mr. Michael Newberry, who had passed away in December. At the Deputy Lord Mayor's request, the Lord Mayor agreed to send letters of condolence to his family and to Linfield and Cliftonville Football Clubs, of which he had been a former player.

Councillor McKeown, on behalf of the Council, expressed condolences to the friends and family of Mr. Jody Gormley, a Gaelic footballer who had recently passed away.

Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 13th December 2024, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

A Member suggested that, in future, consultation responses such as the "Consultation Low Carbon Residential Heating Consultation Response" and the "DAERA Consultation on the establishment of a Just Transition Commission for Northern Ireland" could be brought before the Climate and City Resilience Committee instead of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, given the latter's often considerable sized agenda.

Amendment

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Alderman McCullough,

That the minute of the meeting under the heading 'Notice of Motion – Armed Forces Covenant' be rejected and, accordingly, that the Council adopts the following motion, noting that it would be subject to an Equality Screening:

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

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On a vote, twenty-seven Members voted for the amendment, twenty-seven Members against and, with three no votes, it was declared a tied vote. Accordingly, with the Lord Mayor having a final and casting vote, it was declared carried.

Amendment

Moved by Councillor Collins,
Seconded by Councillor Groogan,

That the minute of the meeting under the heading 'Notices of Motion – Quarterly Update: Closure of Notices of Motion and Issues Raised in Advance' be amended to keep the "Save West Wellbeing Suicide Awareness" motion open.

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

Adoption of Minutes

The Lord Mayor put the minutes, as amended, to the Council for approval and adoption.

As there was no consensus, the minutes, as amended, was subject to a vote.

On a vote, thirty Members voted for the approval and adoption of the minutes, as amended, and twenty-eight Members voted against and accordingly it was declared carried.

In response to a number of Members' queries, the City Solicitor provided the Council with confirmation of voting procedures during Hybrid meetings.

Minutes of People and Communities Committee

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

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 3rd December, 2024, be approved and adopted.

Single Parent Family Membership Category

A Member requested that the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services would write to GLL to ascertain whether its Belfast centres would be the first within its network to offer Single Parent Families a discounted membership and to highlight that they were also, perhaps, the first leisure centres on the island of Ireland to do so.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing addition, the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 3rd December were thereupon approved and adopted.

**Meeting of Council,
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Minutes of City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Alderman Lawlor and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 4th December, 2024, be approved and adopted.

Minutes of Licensing Committee

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Doran and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 11th December, 2024, 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 Carson,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 10th December, 2024, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

**Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd.
Shareholders' Committee**

Moved by Councillor Ferguson
Seconded by Councillor Ó Néill,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 19th December, 2024, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Restricted Item

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

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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.

Adoption of Minutes

After discussion, the minutes of the proceedings of Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee of 19th December, 2024, were thereupon approved and adopted.

Climate and City Resilience

Moved by Councillor R.M. Donnelly,
Seconded by Councillor R. Brooks and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Climate and City Resilience Committee of 5th December, 2024, be approved and adopted.

Standards and Business Committee

Moved by Alderman Lawlor,
Seconded by Councillor R. McLaughlin and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Standards and Business Committee of 7th January be approved and adopted.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Monday, 27th January, 2025

MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Ms. S. Murtagh, Portfolio Manager, Property and Projects;
Ms. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration and
Development;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. C. Sheridan, Director of Human Resources; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting 13th 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 9th January, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee

Declarations of Interest

Councillors Groogan, R-M Donnelly and Duffy declared an interest in item 8(a) Minutes of the Shared City Partnership in so far as it related to PEACEPLUS in that

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they worked for organisations which had applied for funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate, they were not required to leave the meeting.

Councillor Groogan also declared an interest in item 2(i) Update on External Funding – UK Shared Prosperity Fund and proposed approach to recouped capital funds in that she worked for an organisation which had applied for funding. As the item did not become the subject of debate, she was not required to leave the meeting.

**Request to present Linen Hall Library
(in relation to Item 7 (b)) - Restricted**

The Committee was advised that, due to a family bereavement, the deputation would not be in attendance.

Restricted Items

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

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

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

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

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 13th December, it agreed to defer consideration of a report on the 2025/26 revenue estimates and rate setting. Accordingly, the Director of Finance provided an updated report following further meetings with the Party Group Leaders and recommended that the Committee:

1. Agree that the decisions 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 2025.
2. Agree the revised £4.9m departmental growth proposals as outlined in paragraph 3.5 of the report and at Appendix 1.

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3. Agree the additional growth requests following Party Group Leader meetings as outlined in paragraph 3.6 of the report and the associated funding strategy for 2025/26 outlined in paragraph 3.7 of the report.
4. Agree to a domestic rate increase of 5.99% for 2025/26 as outlined in paragraph 3.3 of the report.
5. Agree to recommend the following cash limits for 2025/26 subject to the impact of the decisions made on items 2, 3 and 4 above:
 - a. A cash limit of £59,659,873 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2025/26, including £1,270,000 for Belfast Investment Fund and £3,000,000 for City Deal.
 - b. A cash limit of £109,423,272 for the People and Communities Committee for 2025/26.
 - c. A cash limit of £22,897,361 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2025/26.
 - d. A cash limit of £2,826,952 for the Planning Committee for 2025/26.
 - e. A Capital Financing Budget of £25,274,022 for 2025/26.
6. Agree the next steps to be taken as outlined in paragraph 10 of the report.

Proposal

Moved by Councillor de Faoite,
Seconded by Councillor Whyte,

That the Committee does not agree to adopt the recommendations in relation to the rate setting and the revenue estimates.

On a vote, no Members voted for the proposal and seventeen against, with two no votes and it was declared lost.

Accordingly, the Committee adopted the recommendations.

**Update on Temporary Contracts
and Agency Workers**

The Committee noted the content of the report and agreed that an Action Plan be developed which set targets for the reduction in the number of agency workers employed in each Council department. It was agreed also that the next report provide details of when each agency post last went out to public advertisement.

Organisational Reviews and Change Programme

The Committee noted the progress on the work programme for the Organisational Reviews and Change portfolio and timescales going forward.

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**Update on Review of the
Property Maintenance Service**

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report until its special meeting scheduled for Friday, 31st January.

World Irish Dancing 2027 bid

The Committee approved the request from ICC Belfast to provide financial support towards the costs associated with hosting the World Irish Dancing Championships in 2027.

Requests for Funding

The Director of Finance reported that the following requests for funding had been received:

1. A request from Linen Hall Library for the Council to make a one-off financial contribution to secure the future of the Library.
2. A request from the Belfast Malone Tornadoes Rugby Football Club for the Council to make a financial contribution to help secure the teams full participation in the 2025 International Mixed Ability World Cup Rugby Tournament (IMART) being held this year in Paris, France.

Belfast Malone Tornadoes Rugby Football Club

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the request from the Belfast Malone Tornadoes Rugby Football Club to allow officers to look at the development of a fund which could support this and similar requests from sporting groups for funding.

Linen Hall Library

Proposal

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

That the Committees agrees to refuse the request submitted by the Linen Hall Library.

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

Further Proposal

Moved by Councillor Nelson,
Seconded by Councillor Whyte,

That the Committee agrees to approve the request for funding of a one-off investment of £175,000 that would assist the Linen Hall Library in continuing

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to operate as it develops a new business model to make it more sustainable and resilient, subject to due diligence being undertaken.

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

Irish Football Association - Blanchflower Park

The Committee considered a report which outlined a request from the Irish Football association to lease a football pitch from the Council at the Blanchflower Playing Fields.

That Committee agreed not to accede to the request.

Newington Football Club

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the report until its special meeting scheduled for Friday, 31st January.

Update on External Funding – UK Shared Prosperity Fund and proposed approach to recouped capital funds

The Committee noted the update provided on UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the proposed additional local capital schemes as a consequence of the funding, and that a further update would be brought to the Area Working Groups for consideration.

Crematorium Fees

The Committee considered a report which sought to address the income gap which currently existed at the Crematorium, the decision on which needed to be included in the 2025/26 rate setting process.

The Committee approved the proposed pricing model as part of the 2025/26 rate setting process.

Provision of pest control in Council estate

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 23rd August 2024, it had considered a request to tender for Pest control services for the Council's estate up to five years at Council owned sites.

The Committee did not agree to proceed with the contract and asked for a future report which considered the implications of providing these services in-house to be submitted to a future meeting. Accordingly, the Committee considered a report in this regard.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
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The Committee:

- noted the contents of the report;
- agreed to proceed to the detailed service design stage of providing an in-house service with more detailed analysis of the costs to be provided;
- noted the update in relation to the pest control interim Single Tender Action;
and
- agreed that officers could continue to use external pest control support as an interim measure.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

**Notice of Motion - Rates Break
Sandy Row Business Community**

The Committee was advised that the Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 7th January, had referred the following motion - Rates Break Sandy Row Business Community, which had been proposed by Councillor Kelly and seconded by Councillor Bunting

“That this Council recognises the difficulties that small businesses in Sandy Row are facing since the closure of the Boyne Bridge and the crisis that some find themselves in due to loss of trade. Agrees to look into a rates break to try and help them through the testing time of the Boyne Bridge closure and recognises that some will not survive without this Councils intervention.”

The motion calls upon the Council to look into a rates break for Sandy Row businesses - the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee was responsible for finance matters and the setting of the rate and in the first instance the motion had been referred to this Committee.

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services pointed that, at this time, Members were normally only asked to note that the Notice of Motion had been received and that, if agreed, a subsequent report would be brought to the Committee outlining a detailed consideration of the Notice of Motion and the potential costs implications. However, it should be noted that the City Growth and Regeneration Committee, at its meeting on 4th December, had already considered a motion on Retail Business in Sandy Row. In agreeing that a report to be submitted to a future meeting, that Committee had also requested that the potential for rates relief for the businesses be investigated as part of that report. That decision was ratified by the Council on 9th January. It was pointed out also that, as the Council did not have the power to grant rates exemptions, the report to come back to Committee would look at the possible options available to Land and Property Services.

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The Committee:

- noted that in accordance with Standing Order 13(i) that Notices of Motion which commit the Council to expenditure must be referred to the appropriate committee for consideration and report;
- noted the Council had already agreed to consider potential for rates relief as set out above, that this work was ongoing and agreed to close the notice of motion; and
- agreed that the motion considered by the City Growth and Regeneration Committee be expanded to include the area on the west side of Durham Street.

Notice of Motion – Armed Forces Covenant

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To consider the Notice of Motion in relation to the Armed Forces Covenant which was agreed by Council at its meeting on 9th January 2025, subject to equality screening pursuant to Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the contents of this report and determine whether it wishes to adopt the Notice of Motion to sign up to the Armed Forces Covenant.

3.0 Main Report

Key Issues

3.1 The Committee will recall that Alderman Lawlor, seconded by Alderman McCullough, proposed the following Notice of Motion at the Standards and Business Committee on 21st November 2024:

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

3.2 Pursuant to Standing Order 13 (n), the Standards and Business Committee referred the Notice of Motion directly to Strategic

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Policy & Resources Committee in order for officers to ascertain what is involved and to ascertain what, if any, the Council's commitments may be in signing the Covenant. At its meeting on 13th December 2024, the Committee rejected the notice of motion.

- 3.3 At Council on 8th January 2025, this decision was overturned and Council agreed to adopt the notice of motion, subject to equality screening. In accordance with Standing Orders, this report sets out detail of the commitments in the Armed Forces Covenant, to include any financial implications, together with outcome of the draft equality screening exercise.
- 3.4 The Armed Forces Covenant can be found at the following link:
<https://www.armedforcescovenant.gov.uk/>
- 3.5 The Covenant sets out two principles. The first is that those who serve in the Armed Forces, whether Regular or Reserve, those who have served in the past, and their families, should face no disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public and commercial services. The second is that special consideration is appropriate in some cases, especially for those who have given most such as the injured and the bereaved.
- 3.6 The intention of the Covenant primarily relates to issues around housing, education or healthcare. The Armed Forces Act 2006 is a UK wide Act which imposes a statutory duty upon specified bodies to have due regard to principles of the Covenant. Specified bodies are those authorities responsible for certain relevant housing, education or healthcare functions.
- 3.7 The draft equality screening report concludes that the signing of the Covenant is likely to have a minor impact on the basis of religious belief and political opinion on both the promotion of equality of opportunity grounds and good relations grounds. This is on the basis that the legacy of the conflict is still very much evident in some areas throughout Belfast and the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant may be a divisive issue.
- 3.8 As such the decision has been screened out at this time. However any future decisions about resource allocation based on signing the Covenant would require an updated screening exercise to be undertaken.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 None associated with this report as the Motion only commits to signing the Armed Forces Covenant.**

Equality or Good Relations Implications

These are set out above.”

Moved by Councillor Bunting,
Seconded by Councillor Ferguson,

That the Committee agrees that the Council adopts the motion and signs up to the Armed Forces Covenant.

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

Accordingly, the Committee agreed to reject the motion and that no further action be undertaken.

Governance

Revisions to Scheme of Allowances

The Committee agreed:

- To defer consideration of the report on the Scheme of Allowances;
- To the establishment of a Remuneration Panel comprising the Chief Executive, the City Solicitor, the Director of Finance and the Director of Human Resources to consider Elected Members remuneration and allowances, with full delegated authority to the Chief Executive to implement any recommendations made by the Panel; and
- To write again to the Minister calling for the current legislation to be amended to provide for the establishment of an independent process to deal with the scheme of allowances, thereby removing Elected Member involvement.

**Appointment to Outside Body –
Belfast Hills Partnership Board**

The Committee was advised that correspondence had been received from the Partnership Manager, Belfast Hills Partnership, indicating that its Articles of Association had been updated to allow for two Councillors from Belfast City Council to become Board members.

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The Council currently had one position, and this was held by the Sinn Fein Party following the selection process for appointments to outside bodies under the St. Lague Order of Choices which was agreed at the Committee meeting held on 26th June, 2023.

Also at that meeting the Committee “*agreed a process to deal with any additional requests from outside bodies for Council representation during the Council term, in that the Party or Parties who would have had the next available choice(s) under the Saint Lague table would be asked to nominate a representative(s)*”.

Accordingly, if the Committee accepted the request the position would be offered in the first instance to the next Party on the list, namely, the Alliance Party.

The Committee approved the request to increase the number of Members on the Board to two and noted that the nomination would be made in accordance with the Committee’s decision of 26th June, 2023 in relation to additional appointments to outside bodies.

Belfast Agenda/Strategic Issues

Planning Update report

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

**Response to Department of Communities
consultation on the draft statutory guidance
on the McCloud Remedy in the Local
Government Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland)**

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 make Members aware of the Department of Communities consultation on the draft statutory guidance on the McCloud Remedy in the Local Government Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) and to seek Members’ approval of the Council’s draft response.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to consider the draft response and approve its submission to the Department of Communities (DfC), subject to any comments or amendment provided.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 After reforming public service pension schemes in 2014 and 2015, the Government introduced transitional protections for older members. However, in December 2018, the Court of Appeal ruled that younger members of the judicial and firefighters' pension schemes had been unlawfully discriminated against because the protections did not apply to them.
- 3.2 This ruling is called the 'McCloud judgment'. As a result of the ruling, changes have been made to the Local Government Pension Scheme(LGPS) to remove the age discrimination. These changes are known as the 'McCloud remedy'.
- 3.3 In 2015, the LGPS in NI changed from a final salary scheme to a career average scheme. Older members who were closer to retirement were protected from these changes. Members were protected if they met these conditions:
- born before 1 April 1957
 - joined the LGPS before 1 April 2012 (or another public service pension scheme)
 - under age 65 and an active member between 1 April 2014 and 31 March 2022
 - took their pension straight away when they left the LGPS.
- 3.4 When a protected member retired, their pension fund compared the career average pension they built up before age 65 with the pension they would have built up in the final salary scheme. If the final salary pension was higher, the difference was added to their pension. This protection is called the underpin.
- 3.5 The LGPS rules changed from 1 October 2023 because of the McCloud remedy. The changes are backdated to 1 April 2015, when the career average scheme started. If a member qualified for underpin protection, they will be protected even if they have already left the LGPS or taken their pension.

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3.6 The McCloud remedy means two main changes for LGPS members:

- 1. Qualifying younger members are now protected by the underpin too. This removes the discrimination found in the McCloud judgment.**
- 2. The new underpin rules are much more detailed. This means that the underpin works fairly and consistently for all protected members. If you were protected by the ‘old’ underpin rules when you took your pension before 1 October 2023, your pension might increase under the ‘new’ rules.**

3.7 In 2020/21 and 2023 DfC consulted on proposals to remove unlawful discrimination found by the courts in the ‘McCloud’ case.

3.8 Members are advised that on 11th December 2024 DfC issued a further consultation and are now seeking further views on draft statutory guidance to implement the McCloud remedy in LGPS (NI). It outlines the topics the draft statutory guidance should cover.

3.9 Members should note that the closing date for responses is 19th February 2025. A copy of the draft response to the consultation is attached as appendix 1 and a summary of the key issues are outlined below.

A Link to the Consultation is detailed below.

<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/consultation-draft-statutory-guidance-implementation-mccloud-remedy-local-government-pension-scheme-northern-ireland>

3.10 DfC are seeking consultees’ comments on the content of the guidance, but in particular on the following points:

- Whether you agree with the approaches proposed**
- Whether the guidance is clear and contains sufficient information on each topic**
- Whether there are any other topics that should be covered in the guidance**

3.11 In summary the key areas are:

- 1. Overall Approach to McCloud Remedy**
- 2. Technical Matters**
- 3. Compensation**

3.12 The draft guidance is intended to support the Scheme Manager in the implementation of the LGPS (NI) McCloud remedy in the following ways:

- By providing the Department's view on the approach that should be taken for a number of key issues in order to achieve a consistent application of the remedy across the LGPS(NI).
- By providing additional guidance on how certain technical issues that may arise should be approached.
- By providing an overview of the legal framework for McCloud compensation.

3.13 The Key issues identified in the draft guidance cover the following areas:

- Governance
- Data Collection and verification
- Identifying members in scope
- Qualifying scenarios
- Case prioritisation

3.14 In relation to the technical issues, these have been identified as:

- Transfers – Issues regarding retrospection
- Multiple sets of underpin figures
- Unpaid additional pension contributions
- Deaths of beneficiaries before payment made

3.15 In relation to Compensation

- Identifying the conditions that must be met for direct or indirect compensation to be possible
- examples of where compensation may be payable in the context of the LGPS(NI)

3.16 Members are asked to consider the draft response in Appendix 1 and approve its submission to the Department for Communities.

Financial and Resource Implications

3.17 There are no implications associated with this report.

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

- 3.18 There are no implications associated with this report.
- 3.19 Members are advised that DfC have undertaken an equality screening assessment on the proposed guidance and this is available on their website.”

The Committee considered the draft response and approved its submission to the Department of Communities (DfC).

**Proposal for Belfast to join UK
Network of Learning Cities**

The Director of City and Organisational Strategy submitted the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval for Belfast Learning City to join the UK Network of Learning Cities, following an invitation from Swansea Learning City, and to endorse attendance at the network’s inaugural meeting and launch in late January 2025, coinciding with International Day of Education.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- a) Consider and agree that Belfast joins the emerging UK Learning Cities Network.
- b) Consider and agree that officer representation (maximum of 2) from the Belfast Learning City’s Network attend the inaugural meeting and launch of the UK Learning Cities Network to be held in Swansea in late January 2025. Members to note the meeting takes place in advance of February Council ratification.

3.0 Key Issues

Background

- 3.1 Belfast joined the UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities in 2018 in recognition of the City’s commitment to promoting lifelong learning for all. This aligns with the vision of the Belfast Agenda, to promote Belfast as a great place to live and work for all.

3.2 Since joining the UNESCO network, Belfast has:

- **Strengthened partnerships with local education, community and business stakeholders:** Under the auspices of community planning, a cross-sectoral 'Learning Cities Leadership Group' currently exists and comprises representatives from QUB, UU, BMET, BHSCT, PHA, Education Authority, Libraries NI, community partners and Council. Other key partners, including the Open University and Belfast Healthy Cities, are engaged and plan to join the Leadership Group.
- **Strengthened partnerships with Learning Cities across the island (Dublin, Derry and Strabane, Limerick, Cork and Waterford):** These relationships have been formalised through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), enabling collaboration, exchange of best practices and access to joint funding opportunities to deliver shared projects that have directly benefited Belfast's learning programmes particularly in areas such as community engagement and skills development.
- **Delivered annual Belfast Learning Festivals:** These festivals have provided a platform to celebrate and showcase formal, non-formal and informal learning opportunities across the city, with participation from schools, businesses and community groups helping reinforce the city's commitment to narrowing educational inequalities and fostering a culture of lifelong learning. The city has also administered grant funding to enable not-for-profit organisations to host a learning event as part of this celebration.
- **Supported initiatives that enhance skills development and community wellbeing:** For example, Belfast Learning City recently funded the Aisling Educational Bursary Awards which supported individuals from underrepresented or disadvantaged backgrounds to access further or higher education.
- **Strengthened partnerships with Learning Cities across the globe:** This has included informal learning exchanges with cities across Europe, South Africa and Australia.

The Irish Network of Learning Cities

- 3.3 In 2019, Belfast joined the Irish Network of Learning Cities (INLC), with the Lord Mayor signing a Memorandum of Understanding between participating cities including Derry**

and Strabane, Cork, Dublin, Limerick and Belfast. The MOU was renewed and re-signed in May 2022.

- 3.4 The INLC meets several times a year to share knowledge, experience and support each other on their learning city journey. The network recently secured and implemented a Shared Island funded initiative which enabled and encouraged learning exchanges and joint initiatives across the INLC.

UK Network of Learning Cities

- 3.5 There are 7 designated learning cities across the UK (including Bristol, Derby, Glasgow, Kirklees, Manchester, Swansea and Wolverhampton). Reflecting on the approach adopted by the all-island Irish Network of Learning Cities (UNESCO promotes the collaborative approach as an exemplar), Swansea are leading an initiative to create a UK network of Learning Cities. Swansea has invited both Belfast and Derry and Strabane Learning Cities to join the Network.

- 3.6 Joining the UK Network will:

- Foster further collaboration with many UK Core Cities, enabling and encouraging the sharing of good practice and amplifying impact of lifelong learning on a national scale.
- Showcase Belfast's achievements and ongoing work, enhancing our city's profile both nationally and globally.
- Position Belfast as a leader in lifelong learning, increasing opportunities for external funding and partnerships.
- Provide a collective platform to influence regional and national policies in support of learning initiatives.

Next Steps

- 3.7 Subject to the consideration and approval of the Council's Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, the proposed next steps are set out below.

1. Belfast Learning City Steering Group will confirm its intention to join the UK Network of Learning Cities.
2. Representatives of the Belfast Learning Cities Steering Group will attend the inaugural meeting and launch event of the UK Network of Learning Cities in Swansea in late January 2025.

3. Opportunities for collaboration within the network will be identified and reported to future meetings of the Committee.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8 There are no membership fees for joining the UK Network of Learning Cities and participation in network activities will align with ongoing Learning City Work.
- 3.9 Attendance at the inaugural meeting and launch of the network in Swansea, if agreed, will incur travel and subsistence costs which can be funded through existing budget assigned for Belfast Learning Cities.
Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
- 3.10 There are no Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications contained in this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Response to Department of Finance consultation on the draft 2025/26 Budget

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

- “1.0 **Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues**
 - 1.1 The purpose of this report is to make Members aware of the Department of Finance consultation on the draft 2025/26 Budget and to seek Members’ approval of the Council’s draft response.
- 2.0 **Recommendations**
 - 2.1 Members are asked to consider the draft response and approve its submission to the Department of Finance (DoF), subject to any comments or amendment provided.
- 3.0 **Main report**
- 3.1 **Key Issues**

The Draft 2025/26 Budget sets out the proposed departmental allocations for the incoming financial year.

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The Executive is encouraging people to get involved in the Draft Budget consultation and have their say on how to prioritise the finite funding available.

- 3.2** Members should note that the closing date for responses is 13th March 2025. A copy of the draft response to the consultation is proposed in paragraphs 3.8 and 3.9 below. A summary of the key issues are outlined below.

A Link to the Consultation is detailed below.

<https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/consultations/draft-budget-2025-26-consultation>

- 3.3** DoF are seeking consultees' comments on the following points:

1. Do you agree with the prioritisation of funding within the 2025-26 draft budget document?
2. What services should be prioritised in the 2025-26 budget?
3. Are there any services that no longer need to be delivered or can be reduced in 2025-26?
4. Do service charges need to be considered for some services?
5. Should Public Sector pay be prioritised?
6. And have you any other views?

- 3.4** The information provided is at a very high level. Unfortunately, this makes it difficult to make an informed response to the questions posed. On that basis it is recommended that the Council does not respond to questions 1-5.

- 3.5** Within the written ministerial statement issued with the consultation documents, dated 19th December 2024, there is reference to the Autumn budget and the increase in employers' National Insurance and the potential cost to local government.

- 3.6** Prior to this in a statement from government on 18th December they have confirmed £515 million in support for local authorities in England to mitigate the additional impact of the increase in employer National Insurance Contributions. As members will be aware, this funding will then come through the block grant as a result of the Barnett Consequentials.

- 3.7** Members will be aware that additional funding received by the Executive via the block grant is unhypothecated and as such

it is at the discretion of the executive as to how that funding is allocated. It is proposed that the Council provides a response to Q6 – Any other views – as follows:

- 3.8 Belfast City Council fully understands the serious financial pressures across public services and local government is committed to doing its bit in addressing those pressures. We do believe in the benefit though of a joined up and ‘whole of government’ approach to public services in Northern Ireland and would encourage us both to work together to protect essential local services. By doing this, we can avoid just transferring the financial pressures public services are experiencing from one part of the public sector to another part of the public sector and instead put our collective efforts into the transformation needed to put all our public services on a sustainable footing.
- 3.9 On that basis, it is imperative, that additional funding received through the block grant as a result of the Barnett Consequentials is passed onto Local Authorities to ensure the continued delivery of core services.
- 3.10 Members are asked to consider the draft response above and approve its submission to DoF. Financial & Resource Implications
- 3.11 There are no implications associated with this report.
- Equality or Good Relations Implications / Rural Needs Assessment
- 3.12 There are no implications associated with this report.
- Members are advised that DoF have undertaken an equality Impact assessment on the draft budget and this is available on their website.”

The Committee considered the draft response and approved its submission to the Department of Finance.

Community Recovery Fund

The Director of Neighbourhood Services submitted the undernoted report;

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 Following a meeting of the Strategy Policy and Resources (SP&R) committee on the 22nd November 2024, members requested Officers to consider the Area Based Facet of the

Community Recovery Fund (CRF) Action Plan, which the Deputy Prime Minister is making available to support communities impacted by the public disorder that took place between July and August 2024, including Belfast. In England this will be issued under section 31 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003, and in Northern Ireland funds will be released to the Department of Finance, to support those communities most affected.

2.0 Recommendation

The Committee is asked to agree that Officers Progress the Community Recovery Action Plan under the following 4 themes: -

- Theme 1 Good Relations Inclusion and Integration
- Theme 2 Wider University and Lower Ormeau
- Theme 3 Community Integration and Inclusion
- Theme 4 Resource Recoupment

3.0 Main Report

3.1 The CRF is allocative and offers a flat rate of £600,000 to Belfast City Council, to be committed and commenced before the end of the Financial Year 2024-25.

Expenditure is eligible under this scheme if it is in response to the violent disorder that took place between July and August 2024 and is on, or in connection with:

- a. Immediate action to safeguard life or property.
- b. To prevent suffering or severe inconvenience.
- c. To reduce the risk of further disorder in the future.
- d. To rebuild social trust and promote cohesion between communities.

3.2 The Fund has deliberately sought to provide local areas with flexibility to design a package that responds to their circumstances. Previous reports have detailed examples of projects which are designed to support Community and Voluntary Activity.

3.3 Officers have considered members feedback in relation to the original area-based approach and are recommending a number of changes to the Community Recovery Action Plan, which will assist bolstering support directly to Communities within Belfast City. The Changes can be summarised as follows: -

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1. CRF002 – Integration and Inclusion has been realigned to £35,000.
2. CRF003 - Community Centre Programme (Reaching Out) has been realigned to £30,000.
3. CRF008 – Community Resource Integration and Inclusion has been increased from £180,000 to £330,000.

This will still leave sufficient budget to develop and target cultural competence and capacity within communities, as there will be opportunity to couple this with Council's Good Relations Action Plan 25/26. However, it also means more investment can be provided directly into Communities in Belfast to improve Integration and Orientation.

3.4 CRF008 will be divided into two parts: -

1. Targeted Intervention £160,000 – Proposals will be sought and developed through an open call for 4 areas in Belfast which have been directly impacted by Racist Attacks, Officers will work with Community Organisations in the following 4 locations, and ensure Community Led proposals to increase Integration and Inclusion of the Migrant population are developed and progressed: -
 - a. Sandy Row/Donnegal Road
 - b. Woodvale
 - c. Connswater
 - d. Greater Falls
2. The remaining £170,000 under this theme; Council will support Projects led by Constituted Community Organisations in Belfast City up to a value of £20,000, through an open call, that support a proactive approach to integration and inclusion of the Migrant population in Belfast City.

3.5 Council will invite projects that specifically address some or all the following:

- Proposals that are innovative and do not duplicate the work of other services.
- Proposals that engage host communities and people from the migrant community.
- Proposals that foster contact and connections with host communities to improve the welcome that people from the migrant community.

- **Proposals that encourage and support groups to involve migrant population to get involved in the life of their communities through participation in local activities, networks, sports and organisations.**
- **Proposals that are delivered in areas where, to date, there has been limited infrastructure / funding for interventions supporting the inclusion of people from the migrant community.**
- **Proposals that provide orientation and advocacy support**

It should be noted that this fund does not support one - off events / festivals, and the said criteria applies to both parts of CRF008.

3.6 The outcomes from the above programme should provide the following: -

- **Community Projects which provide Increased Integration, Inclusion and Orientation for the Migrant Community in Belfast**
- **A reduction in Anti-Muslim hate.**
- **Increased Community Leadership and Competence**

3.7 Further to the above it is anticipated that the direct outcomes and data attained from the said projects will inform the core work of Council's Good Relations Action Plan and Strategy.

3.8 The Action Plan attached has been submitted and agreed in principle with the department. Officers have been in discussions with the relevant department in Westminster and providing programmes are committed Council will have the ability to deliver into the Financial Year 25/26. That said, members should note that the Good Relations Manager will have to agree the said changes with the Department of Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government.

3.9 Following members comments in November at SP&R Officers have reviewed the fund criteria above and amended the four main themes of the action plan for delivery as follows: -

- **Theme 1 Good Relations Inclusion and Integration**
- **Theme 2 Wider University and Lower Ormeau**
- **Theme 3 Community Integration and Inclusion**
- **Theme 4 Resource Recoupment**

Full Detail of the Community Recovery Action Plan can be seen in Appendix 1

3.10 Financial and Resource Implications

All the budget detailed within the report is at 100%, the biggest implication is that of resource to design, implement, manage and monitor the programmes, however Council will be able to recoup this under Theme 4.

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

All the above aligns with Council's Good Relations Strategic Framework, which seeks to improve Good Relations between people from different political, religious, and racial backgrounds."

The Committee agreed that officers progress the Community Recovery Action Plan under the following 4 themes:

- Theme 1 Good Relations Inclusion and Integration;
- Theme 2 Wider University and Lower Ormeau;
- Theme 3 Community Integration and Inclusion; and
- Theme 4 Resource Recoupment.

It agreed also to realign the budget as follows: -

1. CRF002 – Integration and Inclusion has been realigned to £35,000.
2. CRF003 - Community Centre Programme (Reaching Out) has been realigned to £30,000.
3. CRF008 – Community Resource Integration and Inclusion has been increased from £180,000 to £330,000. £160,000 would be allocated to 4 areas (Sandy Row/Donnegal Road, Woodvale, Connswater and Greater Falls) and £170,00 allocated to an open call for the constituted community organisation.

Review of Illuminate Policy

The Committee deferred consideration of the report to enable a further report to be submitted which addressed those issues which had been raised by Members.

**Smart Belfast: City Innovation
programme update**

The Committee was informed that the Smart Belfast Urban Innovation programme encouraged collaboration between government, industry, SMEs, academia, and communities. The aim was to harness digital innovation to address public policy challenges, while at the same time encouraging greater investment in innovation to

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stimulate economic growth. The following update outlines two initiatives that would contribute to these aims:

Inclusive Innovation Workshop

The Deputy Chief Executive reminded Members that they had previously approved a city partner workshop to be held to explore the opportunities for 'inclusive innovation'; what it means; why it's important; and how it can help to unlock more local economic and social value from innovation investments such as Belfast Region City Deal and planned major investments by the UK Government in innovation over the next four years.

Invitations had been extended to all Members, community organisations, industry, public and university partners (with 70 participants currently confirmed). It would take place on 28th January at the Titanic Hotel from 9.15 am. The agenda had been developed with the Belfast Innovation Commissioner, Adrian Johnston, who would be chairing the event. It would feature local and national speakers who would share their experiences and perspectives on inclusive innovation. This would include the Council's own four-year Hubs of Innovation project with the Maritime Belfast Trust; research by King's College which had been working with Catalyst on measuring inclusive innovation; Newcastle Upon Tyne's i30 research programme (which was looking at practice in Newcastle, Belfast, Medellin, and Pittsburgh); and Queen's University's Communities and Place programme.

The workshop, which was mainly funded by Horizon 2020, would help inform a future programme of work led by the Innovation Commissioner and the City Innovation Office. Members were encouraged to come along.

'Bloomberg Philanthropies Mayoral Challenge' competition

This global innovation competition opened every few years and provided city governments with up to \$1 million and multi-year support to transform an essential, city-wide public service.

The competition was delivered in two stages: Phase 1 provides up to \$50,000 to 50 cities to refine and test their initial ideas (March 2025.) While Phase 2 would provide 25 of these cities with a further \$1 million to bring their ideas to life. (Phase 2 awards would be made in October 2025.)

The deadline for submission was 20 December, which had given Council officers very little time to prepare an application that would meet Bloomberg's detailed criteria and not affording time to submit this first iteration of the application to the Committee in advance. Officers had therefore focused on areas that aligned to areas of work already agreed by Members. Following an ideation process, that included discussions with the Bloomberg team in New York, the Belfast application focused on re-imagining the city's alleyways. The idea was to develop a mechanism that would allow the Council and other bodies, including social enterprises, to work directly with communities to sustainably manage city alleyways to promote biodiversity, cultural activities, to encourage active travel, and, by doing so, crowd out anti-social behaviour. This would build on an existing priority of Members and the existing work of the Parks Outreach Team, the Climate team and others.

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Accordingly, the Deputy Chief Executive asked the Committee to note the application, and that any decision on whether Belfast had made it through to the first phase was expected in March 2025 at which point, if selected to progress to the next stage, the proposal would be brought back to Members for further consideration.

The Committee noted:

1. the details of the Inclusive Innovation workshop and the invitation to Members; and
2. that Belfast City Council had applied to the Bloomberg Mayoral Challenge competition to support work on re-imagining city alleyways and that the Deputy Chief Executive would provide Members with details of the Bloomberg application

Draft Performance Improvement Objectives 2025-26

The Committee considered a report which sought approval of the draft performance improvement objectives and indicative actions for 2025/26 and for their issue for public consultation.

The Committee:

- i. agreed the Council's proposed 2025-26 draft performance improvement objectives and indicative actions, subject to minor edits based on feedback.
- ii. agreed that the proposed 2025-26 draft performance improvement objectives and indicative actions were issued for public consultation for a period of 8 weeks. The draft performance improvement objectives were summarised below for Members:

Draft performance improvement objectives 2025-26
Our services We will continue to adapt and improve our services to better meet the needs of our residents and stakeholders.
Our people and communities We will improve our local areas and provide opportunities to support our residents to become healthier and engaged.
Our place We will create a more vibrant, attractive, and connected city (including the city centre).
Our planet We will champion climate action; protect the environment and improve the sustainability of Belfast.
Our economy We will stimulate inclusive growth and innovation, help businesses to start-up and grow and create opportunities for more and better jobs and employment.
Compassionate city We will support our most vulnerable people to make Belfast a more caring, safe, and inclusive city.

- iii. noted the next steps, as outlined in the report.

Physical Programme and Asset Management

Physical Programme

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 The Council’s Physical Programme currently includes over 200 capital projects with investment of £150m+ via a range of internal and external funding streams, together with projects which the Council delivers on behalf of external agencies. The Council’s Capital Programme forms part of the Physical Programme and is a rolling programme of investment which either improves existing Council facilities or provides new facilities. This report presents requests for approvals under the Capital Programme, approval to procure as required for the Physical Programme along with updates on UKSPF, Belfast Bikes, capital letters of offer and contracts awarded.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- **Capital Programme:**
 - **IT Programme** – Folder Inserter Equipment – Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of up to £69,000 be allocated.
 - **City Hall Stained Glass Windows** - Agree that ‘City Hall Stained Glass Windows – Health Service and LGBT Community’ is moved to *Stage 3 – Committed*; note that a satisfactory tender return has been received for the LGBT window, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of up to £35,000 be allocated to each of the windows, a total allocation of up to £70,000.
 - **Belfast Bikes** - Note that a satisfactory tender return has been received for a new Belfast Bikes operator, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council; and note that capital costs can be met via an existing

- reserve along with either external funding or a growth proposal as part of the Revenue Estimates 2025/26 & Medium-Term Financial Planning report.
- **EV Charging Network** - Agree that 'EV Charging Network' is added to the Capital Programme at *Stage 1 – Emerging*, arising from the agreed LEV Strategy, to allow a business case to be developed.
 - **Fleet Replacement Programme 2025/26** – Note the agreed fleet programme for 2025/26 at Appendix 1 including the replacement of the Lord Mayor's official car.
 - **North Foreshore Development Site** - Infrastructure Works – Note the cost increase for this project since the original budget was allocated in 2016, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council and can be met via capital receipts from the North Foreshore site as previously agreed by Members; and agree to a budget increase of £1.8m.
 - **IT Programme** – Corporate HR/Payroll System - Note the cost increase for this project since the original budget was allocated in 2016 and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree to a budget increase of £93,000 up to a maximum total allocation of £486,000.
 - **Procurement process for 2025/26 Non-Recurrent Programme, Fleet Programme and Externally Funded Projects** - agree that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for any Physical Programme projects in 2025/26 including Fleet Replacement Programme, non-recurrent programme and externally funded projects as required with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.
 - **UK Shared Prosperity Fund** – to note the update provided and the proposed additional local capital schemes as a consequence of the UKSPF funding and that a further update will be brought to the AWGs for consideration.
 - **Capital Letters of Offer** – to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer in Q3 2024/25.
 - **Contracts awarded** – to note the update in relation to contracts awarded in Q3 2024/25.

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

3.1 Physical Programme

Members will be aware that the Council runs a substantial Physical Programme. This includes the rolling Capital Programme – a multimillion regeneration programme of investment across the city which improves existing Council assets or provides new council facilities. The Council also delivers externally focused funding streams such as Belfast Investment Fund (BIF), Local Investment Fund (LIF), Social Outcomes Fund (SOF) and Neighbourhood Regeneration Fund (NRF), as well as numerous physical programmes and standalone projects that we deliver for central government. Our funding partners include National Lottery Heritage Fund, SEUPB PeacePLUS, the Executive Office, DfC, DfI including the Living with Water Programme, DAERA, Ulster Garden Villages, Levelling Up Fund (LUF), UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) and others. When appropriate, the Property & Projects Department is happy to arrange site visits to any projects that have been completed.

3.2 Capital Programme - Proposed Movements

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

Project	Overview	Stage movement
IT Programme – Folder Inserter Equipment	Folder inserter equipment is hardware used for automated mailing processes within Digital Services. It is required for large volume communications processing for NIHE and the Council.	Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of up to £69,000

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Project	Overview	Stage movement
City Hall Stained Glass Windows – Health Service and LGBT community	The creation of two new stained glass windows at City Hall, in recognition of the Health Service in Belfast and the acknowledgement of the positive role of the LGBT community in Belfast	Move to Stage 3 – Committed with a maximum budget of up to £70,000
EV Charging Network	The development of a publicly accessible electric vehicle charging point network on Council owned assets	Add at Stage 1 - Emerging

3.3 IT Programme – Folder Inserter

A new folder inserter is required to continue to provide a high volume enveloping service for NIHE mandated via a Service Level Agreement, and internally for council departments. Members will recall that in August 2024 this project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* and held at *Tier 0 – Scheme at Risk* pending further development of the project and a satisfactory tender return. An update was to be brought back to Committee along with the final budget allocation and confirmation that this is within the affordability limits of the Council. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received and that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree that a maximum of £69,000 be allocated.

3.4 City Hall Stained Glass Windows – Health Service and LGBT Community

Members will recall that in September 2022 this project was moved to *Stage 2 – Uncommitted*. Due to the bespoke nature of this project, a procurement exercise for the LGBT Community window has been carried out to inform the business case process. The design for the LGBT window has been agreed by Members and work on the Health Service window will be progressed this year. Members are asked to agree that ‘City Hall Stained Glass Windows – Health Service and LGBT Community’ is moved to Stage 3 – Committed; note that a satisfactory tender return has been received for the LGBT window, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this project is within the affordability limits of the Council and

agree that a maximum of up to £35,000 be allocated to each of the windows - a total allocation of up to £70,000.

3.5 Belfast Bikes

The Belfast Bikes scheme was launched in April 2015 with a network of 30 docking stations and 300 bikes. NSL Limited has operated the scheme (under contract) on behalf of the Council since its inception, and it uses bikes and supporting infrastructure provided by 'Next bike by TIER'. Currently, the network comprises of 60 docking stations and 560 bikes. The contract with NSL Limited expired in March 2024. It was extended initially to December 2024 and then on a rolling extension up to maximum period to 9 months.

Members will recall that in October 2024, the Council approved a new operating model and revenue structure for the Belfast Bikes Scheme. It was agreed that after conclusion of the procurement exercise, Members would be updated about the outcome and clarity around any costs associated with the transition. The procurement exercise has now concluded and a preferred operator has been identified. Operational costs will be managed as part of annual revenue budgets. Members are advised that a bid has been submitted to DfI Active Travel for capital funding to support this phase of Belfast Bikes and a decision is awaited. If the Council is unsuccessful in securing external funding, then it is proposed that the remaining potential capital costs related to this project will be met via a growth proposal. Members will be aware that this proposal, if required, is part of the Revenue Estimates exercise. Members are asked to note that a satisfactory tender return has been received for a new Belfast Bikes operator, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that it is within the affordability limits of the Council; and note that capital costs can be met via an existing reserve along with either external funding or a growth proposal as part of the Revenue Estimates 2025/26 & Medium-Term Financial Planning report.

3.6 EV Charging Network

Members will be aware that the Low Emission Vehicle (LEV) Strategy was approved by Council in September 2024. This project arises from the strategy and will see the development of a publicly accessible electric vehicle charging point network on Council owned assets, working with a commercial partner. The switch to LEVs, and particularly to Electric Vehicles, alongside a significant shift away from private car use, will be critical to Council's success in meeting

its net zero targets. Action will also demonstrate leadership and provide a service to residents, visitors, and businesses.

Members are asked to agree that 'EV Charging Network' is added to the Capital Programme at Stage 1 – Emerging, arising from the agreed LEV Strategy, to allow a business case to be developed.

3.7 Capital Programme - Fleet Programme 2025/26 - including replacement of the Lord Mayor's car

- 3.7 Members will know that the Council needs to run and maintain a substantial fleet in order to deliver its services. There is a rolling allocation of £2.2m towards the Fleet Programme for 2025/26. The Fleet Programme has been developed in conjunction with Council departments and reflects the service needs of the organisation, and there are ongoing issues caused by the high age profile and condition of the fleet operating well beyond its recommended operational life cycle. The agreed Fleet Programme for 2025/26 is attached at Appendix 1. Members are advised that this includes the replacement of the Lord Mayor's official car, last considered by this Committee in February 2020, the lease contract for which ends in October 2025. As previously, the Fleet Unit have engaged with the Lord Mayor's Unit to ensure that the requirements, duties and obligations of the Office of the Lord Mayor are considered along with mileage requirements and capability. In keeping with the Council's previous decision the replacement car will be fully electric. The replacement car will be a four door executive saloon type vehicle with higher range than the existing vehicle, considered to be more in keeping with the operational requirements of the role. Due to delivery lead times it is anticipated to take a minimum of six months to acquire the new replacement lease/hire vehicle once ordered. Members are asked to note the agreed Fleet Programme for 2025/26.

Project Updates

3.8 North Foreshore – Development Site Infrastructure Works

This project was moved to *Stage 3 – Committed* on the Capital Programme in March 2016 and a total budget of £6.9m was allocated in September 2016 to be met by capital receipts from the site as well as the Landfill Closure provision. The project involves the development of a gas ring main and edging gas membranes, storms drains, access ramps and associated landscaping as a pre-requisite to the development of individual sites and to ensure that the economic, regenerative and social

impacts of the North Foreshore site are maximised. Substantial works on this project have already been completed. One of the most significant elements to deliver is an NIE substation and overall NIE upgrade connection to meet greater capacity power needs on the site. This is required now given the significant developments on the North Foreshore including the completion of Phase 2A of the Film Studios and the commencement of the works on the commercial led development sites. Engagement with NIE to move this element forward has been ongoing for a number of years, and NIE have now confirmed that the specification required and the passage of time since the initial agreements means that costs have increased. Legal Services have advised that the terms and conditions set out initially mean that any further challenge on this matter from the Council would be difficult given the pandemic and other mitigating factors. Members are asked to note the cost increase related to the NIE substation since the original budget was allocated in 2016, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council and can be met via capital receipts from the North Foreshore site as previously agreed by Members; and agree to a budget increase of £1.8m.

3.9 IT Programme – HR/Payroll Replacement HR/Payroll/Time and Attendance System

Members are reminded that in August 2016 it was agreed to move the Replacement HR/Payroll/Time and Attendance system to *Stage 3 - Committed* on the Capital Programme with a maximum budget of £328,910 allocated, with a further allocation of £64,000 in April 2020. This project is nearing completion and due to additional system requirements an additional £93,000 is requested. Members are asked to note the cost increase for this project since the original budget was allocated in 2016, that the Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council and agree to a budget increase of £93,000 up to a maximum total allocation of £486,000.

3.10 Approval to Procure 2025/26

Members are asked to agree that any necessary procurement processes (including the invitation of tenders and/or the use of appropriate 'framework' arrangements) be initiated for any Physical Programme projects in 2025/26 including Fleet Replacement Programme, non-recurrent programme and externally funded projects as required with contracts to be awarded on the basis of most economically advantageous tenders received and full commitment to deliver.

3.11 UK Shared Prosperity Fund update and additional schemes

Members will recall that the Council secured £1,787,615 from the UK Government's Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for 2024-25, covering both revenue and capital projects. The capital funding is targeted at pitch and playground improvements and delivery of these now externally funded projects is well underway with several already completed on site. As previously highlighted, a total of £1.1m of capital budget has therefore been recouped and can be directed towards a range of additional small scale local capital schemes.

The proposals for the additional schemes as a consequence of the successful bid to UKSPF are now brought forward as follows: upgrades to basketball provision – west, east, south; a modular changing and flexible space facility at Loughside, and a series of inclusive and accessibility projects including a mobile Changing Places facility, Makaton communications boards in playgrounds and sensory garden schemes. An update will be brought to the next series of Area Working Groups with more details on the list of projects for consideration. Members are asked to note the update provided on the proposed additional local capital schemes as a consequence of the UKSPF funding and that a further update will be brought to the AWGs for consideration.

3.12 Capital Letters of Offer

Members are asked to note the update in relation to capital letters of offer accepted in Q3 2024/25 at Appendix 2.

3.13 Contracts Awarded

Members are asked to note the award of tenders for capital works including services related to works in Q3 2024/25 at Appendix 3.

3.14 Financial and Resource Implications

Financial Implications –

IT Programme – Folder Inserter Equipment - a maximum of £69,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

City Hall Stained Glass Windows – a maximum of £70,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Belfast Bikes - The Director of Finance has confirmed that the new operator contract is within the affordability limits of the Council - capital costs can be met via an existing reserve along with either external funding or a growth proposal.

Fleet Replacement Programme 2025/26 – this is an existing rolling allocation of £2.2m on the Capital Programme.

North Foreshore Development Sites – Infrastructure Works – a maximum of £8.7m is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council and can be met by capital receipts from the site.

IT Programme – Corporate HR/Payroll System - a maximum of £486,000 is now allocated to this project. The Director of Finance has confirmed that this is within the affordability limits of the Council.

Resource Implications – Officer time to deliver.

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

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

The Committee adopted the recommendations as set out in paragraph 2 of the report, but agreed to defer consideration of the replacement of the Lord Mayor’s official car until further information had been provided to the Committee on the specification and the cost.

Assets Management

The Committee:

- i) First Floor Office, The Stables, Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park - Lease Renewal** - approved a new lease being entered into between the Council and Church Mission Society Ireland T/A CMS Ireland for use of the First Floor Office, The Stables, Sir Thomas and Lady Dixon Park.

Finance, Procurement and Performance

Contracts Update

The Committee:

- Approved the public advertisement of tenders as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 1);
- Approved the award of STAs in line with Standing Order 55 exceptions as detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 2);
- Approved the modification of the contract as per Standing Order 37a detailed in Appendix 1 (Table 3); and
- Noted the process changes detailed in Section 6.0 Procurement Governance – retrospective STAs.

Table 1: Competitive Tenders

Title of Tender	Proposed Contract Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Short description of goods / services
Soft floor coverings including installation and repair services	Up to 5 years	£500,000	S Grimes	Recurring measured term contract to ensure soft floor coverings continue to meet standards across the Council estate. Specialist service.
Swimming pool filtration and ozone generator installations including callouts, repairs and planned maintenance	Up to 5 years	£2,300,000	S Grimes	Recurring measured term contract to ensure swimming pool filtration and ozone generator installations remain operational across the Council estate. Specialist service
Asbestos analyst services including inspection, testing and certification	Up to 5 years	£125,000	S Grimes	Statutory duty to manage asbestos containing materials across the Council estate. Specialist service.
Small tools contract	Up to 3 years	£36,000	S Leonard	Operational requirement to ensure

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				all tools within the Fleet Management Unit are regularly inspected and repaired/replaced as required.
Strategic support programme for the VCSE Sectoral Advisory Panel and citywide network	Up to 4 years	£120,000	J Tully	The VCSE Panel plays an important role in driving the Belfast Agenda forward through articulating the voice of VCSE sectors in strategic planning; supporting the development of cross-sectoral relationships and improved partnership working and promoting ongoing and effective community engagement. Specialist support required.
Asylum Support and Community Link Advisor Project	Up to 2 years	£170,000	D Sales	To support services to asylum seekers
Asylum Support and Organisational Development and Capacity Programme	Up to 1 year	£100,000	J Girvan	To support organisations providing services to asylum seekers
Traffic management services at Council events and emergency works related to dangerous buildings	Up to 2 years	£200,000	D Martin	To support the delivery of large-scale BCC led public events that require traffic management provision to close roads, manage traffic and when applicable give access to public transport. Building control also have a requirement for this service and will utilise this contract in respect of traffic management around

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				emergency works. Specialist service.
Receipt, stock control and delivery of waste containers	Up to 4 years	£780,000	D Sales	To support waste management operations with the supply of waste containers to households for recycling.
Procurement of external Security Operations Centre (SOC) Services to augment the security team in Digital Services Previously approved Dec 2024 for 3 years at £500,000. Duration and value updated following review.	Up to 5 years	£1,000,000	S McNicholl	There is an increasing risk of a serious cyber security attack or a significant data breach that cannot be managed by the security team in Digital Services. This has the potential to severely disrupt the operational delivery of all council services for a sustained period.

Table 2: Single Tender Actions

Title	Duration	Est. Max Contract Value	SRO	Description	Supplier	STA Reason
Publisure Annual License	Up to 3 years	£78,818	P Gribben	Publisure provides a secure email and consolidation platform (including test/backup server). Service Level Management Ltd are the only supplier who provide Publisure.	Service Level Management Ltd	3. Technical reasons

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Belfast Maritime Festival presents 'Festival of Fools.'	Up to 10 months	£40,000	D Martin	The 'Festival of Fools' brand has an established brand identity with exclusive rights that will complement the 'Belfast Maritime Festival' and enhance the visitor experience.	Festival of Fools	4. Intellectual property
Provision of Clockwise System	Up to 1 year	£63,489	P Gribben	The replacement HR/payroll/time management system is in implementation stage and continued use of Clockworks is required. Softworks Ltd are the only supplier who provide Clockworks.	Softworks Limited	3. Technical reasons
Provision of a Case Management Solution for C&NS	Up 2 years	£197,828	S McNicholl	There is no other supplier who can offer the license and support requirements for this case management solution. 2 year STA is required to ensure continuity of service whilst a comprehensive procurement exercise is	Civica	3. Technical reasons

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				conducted for a new case management solution.		
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Table 3: Modification to Contract

Title of Contract	Original Contract Duration & Value	Modification	SRO	Description	Supplier
T2014 – supply and delivery of paper and plastic sacks	Up to 4 years & £620k	Additional 3 months and £40,000	S Grimes	3-month extension of existing contract to help facilitate a re-tender exercise. Work is underway on the re-tender exercise with a pre-market engagement exercise started to help with specification revisions and address current supply performance issues.	Cromwell Polythene Limited
T1978 – supply and delivery of mechanical sweeper brushes Reporting Retrospectively	Up to 4 years & £410k	Additional 4 months and £30,000	D Sales	A contract modification is required to allow for a new tender process to be completed. Work is underway to review and update the current specification in line with departmental requirements.	R D Mechanical Services Ltd

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T1998 (3) - Provision of catering at the Stables Café.	Up to 61 months (Income based contract)	Up to 2 months	S Leonard	The evaluation of the replacement tender is underway and a 2 month contract extension is required to ensure continuity of service and sufficient time for potential handover to a new service provider (depending on the outcome of the evaluation process).	USEL
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Equality and Good Relations

Minutes of Shared City Partnership Meeting on 13th January 2025

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes and recommendations from the Shared City Partnership Meeting held on 13th January 2025, including:

Good Relations Action Plan 24/25 Quarter 3 Update

- That Members recommend to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee that they note the contents of the report, including the reallocation of £7,500 from BCC9 into BCC7 to support the Christmas Interface Events as well as the allocation of the additional funding from TEO.

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PEACE IV – Secretariat Update

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

PEACEPLUS Local Community Action Plan – Update

- Members note the contents of the report and agree acceptance of the Letter of Offer and recommend that the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee also note the contents of the report and agree acceptance of the Letter of Offer.

AOB

- Members agreed to undertake a walking tour of the Forth Meadow Greenway on either Thursday, 27th March, at 13.30, or Wednesday, 30th April, at 13.30, Officers to progress.

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 16th January.

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

The Committee approved the recommendations as set out below:

NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Youth Action NI	9 April 2025	80th Birthday Celebration Dinner - Reception, Dinner, Speeches, entertainment and dancing. Numbers attending: 200	C	Current rate free as charity	

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Bready Ulster Scots	5 April 2025	European Highland Dance Championships Celebration Evening - Reception, Dinner, Speeches, entertainment and ceili dancing for guests attending the Highland Festival. Numbers attending: 200	A & B	Current rate free as charity	
Community Arts Partnership	12 April 2025	The Trash Fashion Show to celebrate 25th Anniversary of CAP providing art projects in the community. The show will showcase fashion pieces made during community workshops. Numbers attending: 200 - 250	C & D	Current rate free as Voluntary Community Group	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as Voluntary Community Group
Queen's University Women Graduates (QUWG)	25 April 2025	Centenary Celebration of QUWG and Opening Reception for the Triennial conference of the Irish Federation of University Women for	A & B	Current rate free as charity	

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		<p>guests attending this 3 day events programme.</p> <p>Numbers attending: 70</p>			
Albert Foundry Football Club	10 May 2025	<p>Club Centenary Celebration - Reception, Dinner, Speeches, entertainment and dancing.</p> <p>Numbers attending: 200 - 250</p>	C & D	Current rate free as Voluntary Community Group	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as Voluntary Community Group & Anniversary
The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB)	23 June 2025	<p>Business Leaders Drinks Reception for guests attending the 5-day CIOB Members Forum in Belfast.</p> <p>Numbers attending: 120 - 150</p>	A & B	<i>Under review</i>	
Queen's University Belfast Faculty of Arts, Humanities & Social Sciences	3 July 2025	<p>International Summer School Farewell Event to mark the end of a three-week International Summer School hosted QUB- drinks reception and dinner and certificate presentation.</p> <p>Numbers attending: 100</p>	A, B and C	<i>Under review</i>	

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
Minorities Recognition Awards NI and University of Ulster	4 July 2025	International Inclusivity Conference Dinner for guests attending this 3-day conference at University of Ulster. Numbers attending: 350 - 400	A &B	<i>Under review</i>	
Paediatric ICU Team in Royal Belfast Hospital	11 September 2025	Paediatric Critical Care Society Gala Dinner for guests attending 3-day conference at ICC Belfast. Numbers attending: 200 - 250	A &B	<i>Under review</i>	
Ulster Journals Ltd	18 September 2025	Ulster Tatler Awards 2025 Drinks Reception, Awards, Dinner and entertainment. Numbers attending: 350 – 400	B	<i>Under review</i>	
International Brigade Commemoration Committee	3 October 2025	Opening Reception for of International Brigade Memorial Trust AGM for guest attending this 3-day AGM.	D	Current rate free as Voluntary Community Group	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as Voluntary Community Group

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		Numbers attending: 75			
Shankill Protestant Boys Arts and Cultural Society	11 October 2025	Shankill Protestant Boys Flute Band 45th Anniversary Celebration Drinks Reception, Dinner, Presentations, and entertainment. Numbers attending: 180 - 220	C & D	Current rate free as Voluntary Community Group	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as Voluntary Community Group & Anniversary
Image Nation NI	25 October 2025	Belfast Diwali Celebrations – an evening of food and entertainment to celebrate one of the biggest celebrations in Hindu Calendar. Numbers attending – 350	C	Current rate free as Voluntary Community Group	Yes, Tea and Coffee Reception as Voluntary Community Group
MKON – <i>Professional Conference Organiser</i>	4 June 2026	Gala Dinner for The Northern European Conference on Travel Medicine for guests attending their 3-day conference taking place in ICC.	A & B	<i>Under review</i>	

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NAME OF ORGANISATION	FUNCTION DATE	FUNCTION DESCRIPTION	CRITERIA MET	ROOM CHARGE	HOSPITALITY OFFERED
		Numbers attending: 350 - 400			
UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA)	23 June 2027	UKCISA Conference Drinks Reception for guests attending their 3-day conference taking place in ICC. Numbers attending: 250	A &B	<i>Under review</i>	

**Request for use of City Hall grounds –
Belfast Photo Festival Photographic
Exhibition in June 2025**

The Committee was reminded that requests for the use of City Hall were normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using criteria agreed for this purpose. Occasionally, however, it was necessary to place such requests directly before the Committee, and the request for the use of the City Hall Grounds by the Belfast Photo Festival fell into this category.

The proposed event would take place from 9th till 30th June, 2025, with the exhibition content placed around the perimeter of the West and East Lawn allowing other events to be hosted and the lawns to remain available for recreational use.

The Committee authorised:

1. the use of City Hall grounds from 9th till 30th June, 2025; and
2. the events to take place on the basis of submission of an event management plan and risk assessment to ensure delivery of a safe public events.

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Use of City Hall Grounds - Multiple Events in 2025

The Committee was reminded that requests for the use of City Hall were normally dealt with under the authority delegated by the Committee to the Director of Legal and Civic Services using criteria agreed for this purpose. Occasionally, however, it was necessary to place such requests directly before the Committee, and there were several requests which fell into this category.

The City Solicitor/Director of Legal and Civic Services Several advised that requests have been received for events over the spring and summer period and that the report sought to update members on larger events using City Hall grounds, due to the larger scale of activities involved it was deemed necessary to seek Committee approval.

The proposed events would take place on the front lawns only and areas such as the Titanic Garden and Cenotaph would remain open to the public. Access to the City Hall building would not be affected.

The events would be free to enter. In each case, the organisers would be providing all stewarding/marshalling staff and first aiders and would of course have to comply with the usual conditions including indemnities for damage and submission of a formal event-management plan.

Accordingly, the Committee was asked to approve the use of the grounds for the following, the details for each having been outlined in the report:

- Epic Journey to The Open 2025 – 29 April 2025
- Action Cancer Breast Foot Forward Walk – 6 June 2025
- Pride Picnic – 19 July 2025
- Féile Rock's Pride Concert – 26 July 2025
- Belfast One Film Screening – 2 and 3 August 2025
- Belfast Mela Carnival Parade Party – 16 August 2025

The Committee authorised:

- 1) the use of City Hall grounds on dates outlined; and
- 2) the events to take place on the basis of the submission of an event management plan and risk assessment to ensure delivery of a safe public events.

Requests for the Use of the Council Chamber

The Committee authorised the use of the Council Chamber by two school groups in order to hold debating events.

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**Minutes of the Castle, Cavehill, Zoo
And North Foreshore Working Group**

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meeting of the Castle, Cavehill, Zoo and North Foreshore Working Group of 7th January.

Chairperson

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Friday, 31st January, 2025

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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

In attendance: Mr. J. Walsh, Chief Executive;
Ms. S. McNicholl, Deputy Chief Executive/Director
of Corporate Services;
Ms. N. Largey, City Solicitor/Director of Legal and
Civic Services;
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy; and
Mr. J. Hanna, Democratic Services and Governance
Manager.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Restricted Items

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

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

The Members were also reminded that the content of ‘restricted’ reports and any discussion which took place during closed session must be treated as ‘confidential

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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 2025/26

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on the 27 January 2025, it had agreed the cash limit for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2025/26 and the recommended cash limits for the People and Communities, City Growth and Regeneration and Planning Committees, subject to consultation with the other committees prior to today's meeting. The Director of Finance reported that the aforementioned Committee's had now met and agreed their cash limits. Accordingly, he recommended that the Committee adopt the recommendations as set out in the report.

The Committee:

1. Agreed that the decisions should not be subject to call-in (as indicated above) 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 2025.
2. Confirmed the cash limits agreed by the Committee at its meeting on the 27th January 2025 as follows:
 - a) A cash limit of £59,659,873 for the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for 2025/26, including £1,270,000 for Belfast Investment Fund and £3,000,000 for City Deal.
 - b) A cash limit of £109,423,272 for the People and Communities Committee for 2025/26.
 - c) A cash limit of £22,897,361 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2025/26.
 - d) A cash limit of £2,826,952 for the Planning Committee for 2025/26.
 - e) A Capital Financing Budget of £25,274,022 for 2025/26.
3. Agreed that the increase in the district rate for 2025//26 should be 5.99%, based on an estimated penny product of £6,716,110 meaning a non-domestic rate of 32.7692 and a domestic rate of 0.4299 and that the amount raised through the district rate in 2025/26 will be £212,984,985.
4. Noted the Chief Executive's statement on the adequacy of the Council's reserves position and the robustness of the revenue estimates as required by the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011.
5. Noted the Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Statement as required by the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (NI) 2011.

**Strategic Policy and Resources Committee,
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Newington Football Club

The Committee considered a report regarding a request which had been received from Newington Football Club seeking the Council to provide a letter of support in relation to a new home pitch within Belfast to enable their application to the Football Fund.

Proposal

Moved by the Chairperson, Councillor Murphy,
Seconded by Councillor Brennan,

That the Committee agrees to provide a letter of support to Newington Football Club in relation to a new home pitch, in principle, at Ballysillan Playing Fields to enable its application to the Football Fund.

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

Property Maintenance Contracts

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 27th January, it had requested the submission of a report relating to the extent to which maintenance services were outsourced to external services. Accordingly, the Director of City and Organisational Strategy submitted a report in this regard, which he pointed out was presented in the context of the review of the Property Maintenance Team within the Property and Projects Department which would be considered later on in the meeting.

The Committee:

- Noted the contents of the report and the specialist Property Maintenance services that were currently contracted out by the Council;
- Noted that the new Property Maintenance structure presented in a separate report provided increased capacity and skills to deliver specialist services via in-house staff, and provided for effective contract management for these specialist services; and
- Agreed that Members be kept updated via Committee, following the implementation of the proposed structure and following the next phase of the review, when any further efficiencies to balance of in-house and contracted-out services were identified.

**Update on Review of the
Property Maintenance Service**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 27th January, it had deferred consideration of a report on the review of the Property Maintenance Service. The Director of City and Organisational Strategy presented a further report which contained the

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information which had been requested. He explained that the report followed the completion of a key phase in the review of the Property Maintenance service within the Property and Projects Department and presented the proposed new staffing structure including any financial implications. The report also sought Committee approval to create a permanent Safeguarding Compliance Manager in the Legal and Civic Services Department.

The Committee:

- **Property Maintenance** - Approved the new staffing structure for the Property Maintenance service at Appendix 3 to the report to enable the establishment of a more effective delivery model, with a full range of clearly defined but flexible roles across the five distinct functions of the service (Fabric, Mechanical and Electrical Engineering Services, Compliance and Safety, Technical Support and Energy Operations); and noted that this approval was subject to a growth proposal for £109,000 which was part of the Revenue Estimates 2025/26 and Medium-Term Financial Planning report.
- **Legal and Civic Services** - Approved the deletion of the temporary Safeguarding Compliance Manager post and the creation and funding of a permanent Safeguarding Compliance Manager post Grade 8 (£61,037), within Legal and Civic Services, and for the post to be filled utilising appropriate processes; and noted that the post would support the compliance requirements in relation to Safeguarding and Assurance Framework.

Standing Order 14 – Submission of Minutes

In accordance with Standing Order 14, the Committee agreed, as the meeting had been held later than seven clear days before the meeting of the Council, that the minutes of the meeting be submitted to the Council on 3rd February for ratification.

Chairperson

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 14th January, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Black, Bower, Bradley,
Bunting, Canavan, Cobain, Doherty, M. Donnelly,
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett, Maghie, Maskey,
McKeown, I. McLaughlin and Verner.
- In attendance: Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood
Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services;
Mr. S. Leonard, Director of Resources, Fleet, Open Spaces
and Streetscene;
Mr. J. Girvan, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Magee.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th January.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Verner declared an interest under item 4a., 'Integrated Advice Partnership Fund', in that the organisation Advice Space rented space within the Spectrum Centre, where she was employed. Councillor McKeown declared an interest in item 3c., 'Request from Belfast Healthy Cities', in that his employer provided funding to the aforementioned organisation.

The Committee noted, given that the above-mentioned declarations were non-pecuniary and did not relate to any narrative nor recommendations within the reports, that both Members were not required to retire from the meeting whilst the matters were under consideration.

Proposed Pedestrian Crossing - Knockbreda Road

At its meeting on 6th August, at the request of Councillor Maghie, the Committee had agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) seeking clarity on when work would commence on a proposed pedestrian crossing on the Knockbreda Road. It was reported that a response had been received which had indicated that officials from the Eastern Division had requested that the Council conduct a further consultation with affected residents with a view to work progressing once that process had been completed.

**People and Communities Committee,
Tuesday, 14th January, 2025**

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor de Faoite, in his capacity as an elected representative for the area, addressed the Committee. He expressed concern that there had been an unnecessary delay in the commencement of the project, which, he added, had been supported by all of the Elected Members within the area. Several Members of the Committee concurred with the comments made and expressed frustration at the length of time it had taken to resolve the issue, given the associated safety risk posed.

The Committee noted the receipt of the correspondence and expressed the view that the consultation be completed at the earliest opportunity in order to progress the matter.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Biodiversity in the Council's Parks and Open Spaces

Further to its meeting of 3rd December, at which Councillor Flynn had requested that an update be provided regarding a motion which he had submitted entitled, 'Biodiversity in the Council Parks and Open Spaces', the Committee considered a report in this regard. The report addressed several issues associated with the delivery of a Local Biodiversity Action Plan and the steps which might be taken in addressing the proposals outlined within the original motion.

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Maghie and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees that a sum of £50,000 (to support the delivery of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan - LBAP) and a sum of £35,000 (to scope and develop the LBAP) be included within the Department's draft estimates of expenditure for 2025/26, subject to approval of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as part of the District Rate setting process for 2025/26.

**Reference Group on Older People –
Minutes of 10th December**

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the minutes of the meeting of the Reference Group on Older People held on of 10th December, 2024.

**Request from Belfast Health
Cities re: WHO Conference**

The Committee considered an invitation which had been extended to the Council by Belfast Health Cities inviting the Chairperson and the Vice-Chairperson (or their nominees) to attend the 2025 European Healthy Cities Network Conference.

The Committee agreed not to be represented at the event given the associated time constraints and logistical arrangements. It was noted that that an invitation would be extended to the Belfast Healthy Cities Network to present at a future meeting on its ongoing work.

Operational Issues

Integrated Advice Partnership Fund

At its meeting on 5th November, the Committee had agreed to seek expressions of interest to oversee the distribution of additional DfC funding through the Integrated Advice Partnership Fund. It was reported that, in response to an open call, one bid had been received from Advice Space. That bid would, if approved, provide debt information and advice services across the city through a range of affiliated partners within an approved consortia. Accordingly, the Committee was recommended to approve the bid, which had been assessed against a pre-agreed criteria, in the sum of £82,496.86, details of which were outlined within the associated report.

The Committee agreed to adopt the recommendation within the report. In addition, it was agreed, in respect of the funding model, which incorporated the Greater Shankill area within West Belfast, that sufficient resources be allocated from within that fund to ensure the adequate provision of services within the Greater Shankill area.

Forth Meadow Community Greenway and Park Opening Hours Consultations

The Committee was reminded that it had authorised the undertaking of a consultation exercise on the opening hours for the Forth Meadow Community Greenway, which would examine also opening hours for the Ormeau Park, the Falls Park and the Woodvale Park. The exercise would include also an overview of the feasibility of including the Belmont Park within its scope. It was reported that the survey would consider the views of local communities in examining accessibility to the parks within the context of maintaining health and safety requirements and addressing concerns linked to antisocial behaviour. Accordingly, the Committee considered a report which outlined several key dates for the undertaking of the exercise.

During discussion in the matter on the Forth Meadow Community Greenway, officers undertook to provide, in addition to an option of completing the survey online, hard copy questionnaires if deemed necessary. It was noted that postcodes would be used to identify and reflect specific feedback from families and individuals living closest to the Greenway, and that steps would be taken to address areas where there had been a lower response rate. In addition, the Committee noted that a proposal regarding accessibility to the Falls Park through a gateway at Ardmonagh Gardens would be omitted from the exercise to allow for a wider discussion to take place with local communities.

The Committee noted the information provided and agreed that the consultation exercise would proceed forthwith, subject to the omission of a proposal regarding the 24-hour opening of a gateway at Ardmonagh Gardens within the scope of the exercise.

Requests for Events in Parks

The Committee considered a report which outlined details of number of applications which had been submitted seeking permission to host events in the Council's parks and open spaces.

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Prior to considering the application for the use of the Boucher Road Playing Fields for the purposes of a circus event, it was reported that further information of a financial nature had since been submitted by a third party seeking to host a similar-type event. In accordance with the provisions within Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, the Committee agreed to consider the information as a restricted matter, when it deemed that the additional information had no material bearing on the original application submitted.

The Committee granted permission for the hosting of the following events within the Council's parks and open spaces, further details in respect of which was contained within the associated report:

- St. Patrick's Day 2025 – Cathedral Gardens – 14th to 17th March, 2025;
- Vega Circus – Boucher Playing Fields – 6th to 29th April, 2025
- 'Wellfest' – Boucher Road Playing Fields – 20th to 27th May, 2025;
- Belfast Mela – Botanic Gardens – 17th to 27th August, 2025;
- Belfast Full Marathon – Ormeau Park – 3rd May to 5th May, 2025;
- Belfast Half Marathon – Ormeau Park – 20th to 22nd September, 2025; and
- Bench to Beside Run – Ormeau Park – 28th September, 2025.

It was agreed also that delegated authority be granted to the Director of Neighbourhood Services to oversee and manage the legal and contractual stipulations as set out within the report regarding the hosting of the events.

Proposals for the Naming of New Streets

The Committee agreed to the naming of Ben Madigan Wood and Ben Madigan Gardens.

Proposals for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee agreed to the erection of a second street nameplated, in Irish, at Glengoland Avenue, Rathcool Street, Suffolk Drive, Lagmore Grove, Kenard Avenue, Upper Suffolk Road, Orchardville Gardens, North Circular Road, Palace Gardens, Cloona Park, Willowvale Gardens, Rossmore Park and Ardenlee Rise.

Issue raised in Advance by a Member

**Bin Collections over the Christmas Period -
(Councillor M. Donnelly)**

The Committee agreed that the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services would consider the provision of a scheme to provide labels on bins that would include information on collection dates in advance of the Christmas period, 2025.

Chairperson

C527

People and Communities Committee

Wednesday, 29th January, 2025

SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Bunting, Canavan, M. Donnelly,
Flynn, Garrett, Magee, McKeown,
McLaughlin and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance; and
Mr. D. Sales, Strategic Director of City and
Neighbourhood Services; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Doherty.

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.

The Committee was 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 2025/26

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

The Committee considered a report of 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 2025/2026.

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The Director recommended that the paper should not be subject to call-in since 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, 2025.

He referred to the cash limit for the People and Communities Committee for 2025/2026, as recommended by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 27th January, and outlined the next steps in the rate setting process.

The Committee noted the next steps in the rate setting process and agreed to the following:

- that a cash limit for the People and Communities Committee for 2025/26 be set at £109,423,272 and the individual service cash limits; and
- that the decision be not subject to the call-in mechanism, given that it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the interest of the Council and its ratepayers in striking the rate by the legislative deadline of 15th February 2025.

Chairperson

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 15th January, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nelson (Chairperson);
The Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor McCormick;
Alderman Lawlor;
Councillors Black, de Faoite, D. Douglas, Duffy,
Harvey, Kelly, Maskey, F. McAteer, McCabe,
McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay,
I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin, O'Neill and Smyth.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. C. Reynolds, Director of City Regeneration
and Development;
Mr. S. Dolan, Senior Development Manager;
Ms. L. O'Donnell, Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism;
Ms. C. Persic, Development Manager; and
Ms. E. McGoldrick, Democratic Services and Governance
Coordinator.

Apologies

No apologies were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 4th 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 2nd December.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor R. McLaughlin declared an interest in item 2.a) Externally Funded Placemaking and Active Travel Projects Update, in that he was on the Board of the Belfast Harbour Commissioners and left the meeting whilst the matter was under consideration.

Restricted Items

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

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

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information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 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.

**Externally Funded Placemaking
and Active Travel Projects Update**

The Director of City Regeneration and Development provided an update on the ongoing engagement with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) in relation to funding to support connectivity, placemaking and active travel projects aligned with A Bolder Vision and strategic priorities within the Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel Action Plan in the Belfast Agenda.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. Noted the update in relation to externally funded projects and the potential to secure DfI funding for Active Travel Enabling projects; and
2. Subject to funding, approved the progression of the projects outlined within the report, including any third party Funding Agreements, consultancy and procurement as required. The Committee noted that funding and the Letter of Offer would be subject to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee approval via the Capital Programme process, in conjunction with the Property and Projects Department or in conjunction with third party delivery partners as outlined within the report.

Vacant to Vibrant Programme

The Committee was provided with an update on the Vacant to Vibrant Programme and considered the recommendations from the Vacant to Vibrant assessment panel following the receipt and assessment of recent applications.

The Committee:

1. Noted the update in relation to the Vacant to Vibrant Programme which, subject to approval of the three applications contained within the report, two for the city centre and one for city wide, which would be supporting up to 41 businesses to locate or expand into long term vacant units;
2. Agreed and noted the recommended grant awards as outlined within Section 3.21 of the report for both the city centre and city-wide schemes;
3. Noted the update on application V2V109; and

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4. Noted the update on application V2V126.

Events Update

The Senior Manager, Culture and Tourism, advised the Committee on the progress and engagement which had been undertaken for a number of forthcoming events, namely: Lord Mayors Day; St Patricks Day; The Euros; Oireachtas na Samhna; and The Fleadh Cheoil.

After discussion, the Committee:

1. Noted progress on events planning;
2. Agreed to the forward budget allocation of £42,000 for the Lord Mayors Day from 25/26 core budget as outlined in 4.0 of the report;
3. Agreed to the recommendations for the Fleadh Cheoil expenditure of circa £100,000 as outlined in 3.8 of the report; and
4. Agreed to the attendance of the Chief Executive and Senior Council Official at the GB Comhaltas convention as outlined in 4.0 the report and the funding of Ards CCE travel costs to the value of £4,000, which would be funded from existing Departmental budgets.

Regenerating Places and Improving Infrastructure

**UP2030 Update - Net Zero
Neighbourhood Framework**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 **To provide an update on the UP2030 Net Zero (NZ) Neighbourhood Framework, including the work to date across the priority themes of active travel, greening and retrofit, stakeholder engagement, and key milestones for 2025, including holding a Members’ briefing workshop.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to:**

- I. **To note the progress to date and future key milestones for the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Horizon Europe funded project to develop a Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework.**

- II. To agree to hold a Members' briefing workshop in early summer on the emerging draft Framework prior to taking the final draft Framework to Committee in the autumn.
- III. To note the 3 main themes of the Framework around Greening, Retrofit and Active Travel, and how the UP2030 project can be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities about Net Zero as well as integrate and inform both local community plans and Council workstreams such as the emerging area planning approach; climate-related work programmes; housing led regeneration programme and specifically how it will fit with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans.
- IV. To note that an update report on UP2030 is also being brought to the Climate and City Resilience Committee tomorrow, 16 January 2025.

3.0 Background

Members will recall that Council is involved in a three-year Horizon Europe consortium programme called Urban Planning 2030 (UP2030) that aims to guide cities through the transitions required to meet their climate neutrality ambitions. The City Regeneration and Development and Climate teams were successful in joint bid of €204,250/£176,024 to further an integrated approach between urban planning, achieving net zero and aspects of resilience. At the most recent update to the City Regeneration & Development and Climate and City Resilience Committees in June 2024 Members were reminded that Belfast is one of 11 pilot cities, and the focus of the project is on the development of a net zero neighbourhood framework around three thematic areas: active travel, greening and retrofit. These themes link across to the UP2030 pillars of a fair and just transition, carbon neutrality and resilience. The Framework will be informed by data, stakeholder engagement and the use of climate tools to support analysis, mapping and engagement in the pilot area.

- 3.1 The geographic area of the UP2030 pilot was agreed at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in March 2023 and covers the Linen Quarter and surrounding city centre communities of Barrack Street, Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Market. Whilst this work was undertaken within a defined boundary the purpose was to produce a framework that could be adapted and used within all communities and

districts to set forward net zero tailored approaches, attract funding and support climate adaptation plans tailored for the uses of that specific district.

- 3.2 Over the past year and a half there has been engagement with communities and wider city partners at each key stage. Members received an update at the CG&R and Climate and City Resilience Committees in June 2024 that outlined the stakeholder engagement, workshops, key milestones and highlighted wider alignment of the UP2030 programme with other workstreams such as the Solar PV Study and the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub.

4.0 **Main Report**

4.1 **Progress to date**

Cross-sector stakeholder engagement

As reported in June 2024, stakeholder engagement has been a key feature of the programme, and the team continue to engage with the local areas as well as thematic, statutory, and citywide partners that have broad experience or are prospective delivery partners. Between April and October 2024 significant engagement took place through workshops and interactive sessions with a range of cross-sector stakeholders including:

- Belfast City Council officers across departments
- Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel (CAST) Belfast Agenda subgroup
- City Greening Group
- Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub
- Cross sector stakeholder Vision and Actions feedback workshop
- Youth session with South Belfast Alternatives Youth Group
- QUB StreetSpace engagement and research group
- Donegall Pass Seniors' Group
- Open Botanic Festival
- Retrofit workshop with elected Members
- World Cities Day Youth Event with BCC Youth Council

- 4.2 The purpose of these events was to encourage people to step into the future and consider what life might be like in a Net Zero (NZ) Belfast of 2050 and gain agreement on the vision for the project across the three themes (greening, active travel and retrofit) as well as to engage in 'climate conversations' to build awareness and understanding of climate change. During

the sessions, participants were presented with mapped geospatial analysis data and the insights gathered on the project to date and asked for feedback on the emerging Framework ideas, local priorities and build a shared understanding of NZ options. Through this we were able to sense check the emerging framework ideas, build a shared understanding of NZ options and agreed the adaptive pathways for the short/long term sequence of actions that would be required to support the transition as well as explore opportunities for pilot projects to help test concepts for the NZ Framework alongside continued stakeholder engagement.

- 4.3 There have also been indirect engagement opportunities that have helped to build knowledge and expand networks which will also help to inform the Framework. For example, the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub is convened by the Climate Team in Belfast City Council and is Chaired by the Royal Society of Ulster Architects. It has over 100 members it takes a consortium approach to catalyse retrofit activity and engages with stakeholders from across the construction supply chain, funders, academics, public sector, housing providers and consumer bodies. Working through the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub a session was held with energy managers from the public and private sector with large scale estates to share experience on retrofitting buildings to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. The Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub also hosted a peer-to-peer exchange with the Galway City Council Warm Homes Hub community retrofit programme and a variety of interested stakeholders from Belfast to explore their One Stop Shop approach and retrofit methodology. This is part of the ongoing work of the Climate Team and demonstrates the importance of linking the shared learning and feedback into the NZ Framework.

4.4 **Building out the Framework**

The UP2030 team have consolidated the feedback to date on the emerging vision and thematic adaptive pathways, data and worked with consortium partners on the format and content of the Framework. Sections one to three of the draft Framework are due for submission to the UP2030 Consortium in February 2025 and is based around the following chapter outline:

Preface

1. Introduction and Context
2. Neighbourhood Assessment
3. Vision and Adaptive Pathways
4. Pilots and What We Tested

5. Lessons Learned
6. Net Zero Neighbourhood
7. Implementation and Recommendations
8. Outputs and Visual Aids

- Report Document: Comprehensive overview
- Visual Guides: Posters, infographics on achieving net-zero by 2050
- Glossary

4.5 Pending feedback from the UP2030 Consortium on the draft Framework, the intention is to go back out to stakeholders in late Spring/early Summer to sense check the actions within the emerging final draft and explore dissemination. As part of this, it also proposed to hold a Members' briefing workshop in early summer that will provide an opportunity to input into the Framework and explore the themes prior to bringing this to Committee for approval in the autumn. This builds on previous engagement with Members that took place as part of the dedicated session on Retrofit and similarly, it is proposed to invite Members from City Growth & Regeneration, Climate & City Resilience and Members who represent the UP2030 area. The final Framework must be submitted by November 2025.

4.6 Primarily, the target audience for the Framework is decision makers and policy makers in local and central government, statutory partners, communities and urban practitioners. As part of the legacy of the project, officers are considering how it will be of use to key stakeholders and looking at this through 'personae' such as a community group, investors, senior public officials, or a thematic or special interest organisation. The value of taking this approach means that officers will be able to structure and tailor the content of the Framework, so that it is accessible and relevant to the core audiences and assist in the dissemination of the material.

Action Phase: Testing Net Zero options

4.7 Alongside the drafting of the Framework, the UP2030 team is in the Action Phase of the programme, which focuses on testing options that could be included in the NZ Framework under the three themes, active travel, greening and retrofit. The exploration of solutions is central to the action phase of the programme wherein we need to trial approaches or actions that can help us achieve NZ whilst also providing an opportunity to engage with citizens on the key themes of the project. The piloting of these approaches helps us to capture lessons learned and recommendations that will form part of the final NZ Framework as well as gaining a better

understanding of the capacity building and knowledge exchange required to help communities transition together. Through this period officers have continued to engage with stakeholders, delivery partners and tool providers to solidify partnerships that will help test some of the NZ approaches that are in the emerging draft Framework. Included in this action phase is a pilot Walking Bus project that will be funded and delivered by Belfast Healthy Cities by March 2025. A Walking Bus is a group of children walking to school together in the morning. They are supported by an adult at the front and at the back of the group, acting as the 'driver' and 'conductor' of the walking bus.

- 4.8 Additionally, a Walking Bus is an action in the Belfast Agenda Connectivity Active & Sustainable Travel (CAST) Action Plan and is an approach that was suggested by communities during the UP2030 engagement period. This pilot draws upon the expertise of one of the consortium tool providers, Design Clips, who are an architectural practice specialising in participatory planning and placemaking with a focus on co-design with children, and Belfast Healthy Cities, who are currently working with schools to deliver walking buses. Adding to the Walking Bus concept, a toolkit and teacher training materials have been developed encouraging children to 'audit' their route to school and considering how their neighbourhood could be cleaner, greener and healthier, creating safe routes and healthy places. Further to the pilot, this toolkit (including a Walking Bus toolkit, teaching materials and activity materials) will be a free resource for any school or community in Belfast and is an example of how the UP2030 NZ approach can be scaled up in other areas.
- 4.9 Similarly, it was agreed in the Climate and City Resilience Committee in June 2024 to support Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA) with their Early Career Architects proposal to run a Net-Zero Neighbourhood Ideas Competition as a partnership between the (RSUA) and JP Corry with support from the NIHE and the Northern Ireland Construction Group (NICG). This work is ongoing and intends to explore how a holistic neighbourhood approach to lowering carbon emissions compares to a more focused property-by-property approach and is an opportunity to build on the visioning outcomes of the retrofit work and importantly, engage with communities in the pilot area to codesign approaches for net zero delivery and contribute to the development of the NZ Framework and consider how it can be replicated in other areas.

- 4.10 Increasingly, new technology comes forward to help address carbon emissions and within the greening theme, we are completing a cost/benefit exercise on the planting and maintenance of 44 trees in the Air Quality Management Area of Cromac Street in comparison to the installation of a technical solution, 'CityTree', which claims to achieve the benefit equivalent in cleansing the air. This exercise builds on the work of the 'Tree Establishment Strategy' survey completed by colleagues in City and Neighbourhood Services which has identified existing canopy cover across the city and highlighted much needed tree planting in areas that have the lowest tree canopy cover, and subsequent lowest tree equity scores and the UP2030 pilot area includes some of the highest priority areas of the city.

Key milestones for 2025

- 4.11 The final output of the UP2030 programme is a NZ Framework that will be an interactive pdf, supplemented by user-friendly information that can also be distributed to communities and other stakeholders. However, central to this project is how the learning is embedded and helps Council and partners adapt and prepare for climate change. The Framework will provide an approach and suggested interventions that can be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities about Net Zero approaches. Going forward, consideration is needed as to how it can integrate and inform local community plans and Council workstreams such as the emerging area planning approach; climate-related work programmes; the housing led regeneration programme, placemaking and mobility initiatives and specifically how it will fit with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans.
- 4.12 The dissemination will take different forms and officers will publish and promote the material in different formats, engage with communities and engage across Council teams and seek to influence wider city and regional stakeholders. The final output is being developed with target audiences in mind that includes decision makers, urban practitioners and community leaders. It is hoped that the Framework will help these audiences to understand what a transition to net zero could look like through the three themes, and the urgency of sequenced actions required.
- 4.13 The UP2030 programme concludes in December 2025. Below are the high-level milestones and deliverables for the year:

- Ongoing roll out of demonstration projects as part of the Action Phase, i.e. Walking Bus, RSUA Early Career Architects NZ Neighbourhood Ideas Competition
- Submission of the draft Framework by February 2025
- Engage in consortium upscaling workshops and with tool providers, including utilisation of the financial and governance toolkit and peer-to-peer learning, and provision of material/content.
- Stakeholder and Member engagement to sense check and validate the NZ Framework, May-June
- Submission of final Framework and reporting to the UP2030 Consortium in November 2025
- Launch and dissemination December 2025 and ongoing into 2026.

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Members will be aware that given that the UK is no longer within the EU, the status of Council was changed from to being a Partner to that of an Associate which means that funding is underwritten by the UK government (UK Research & Innovation, UKRI) fund rather than the EU. The Horizon Europe UP2030 Project is 100% funded for revenue only. No additional funding is required from Council however a small team drawn from the Climate Team and City Regeneration and Development work together to oversee development and support implementation. Officers continue to work with partners to identify potential capital or revenue funding in the future and align current and emerging workstreams that could support the transition to net zero.

6.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

Officers will carry on an Equality Screening on the final NZ Framework and will incorporate within the emerging proposals.”

During discussion, the Committee suggested the following additions for inclusion in the draft Framework:

1. Geothermal sites – practical implementation of geo-engineering and the potential to use in social housing; and
2. Upskilling of young people on retrofitting and geothermal engineering.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development and Development Manager answered a range of questions in relation to the low carbon heat network, geothermal sites, upskilling, air quality, active travel opportunities, the walking bus and school streets

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pilot, and the Bristol Tree Replacement Standard and Tree Strategy. The Development Manager highlighted that the heat network, geothermal and retrofit strands were being taken forward through the work of the Climate Team.

In answer to a Member's question in relation to the boundary of the Neighbourhood and the surrounding communities ability to feed into the process, the Development Manager highlighted that a climate session could be accommodated with groups and that shared learning in regard to retrofitting would be considered also.

The Director of City Regeneration and Development advised the Committee that the relevance of the Framework would be engrained in the other Council initiatives such as the Housing Leg Regeneration programme.

After discussion, the Committee:

- Noted the progress to date and future key milestones for the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Horizon Europe funded project to develop a Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework, and that Members comments would be considered for inclusion in the draft Framework;
- Agreed to hold a Members' briefing workshop in early summer on the emerging draft Framework prior to taking the final draft Framework to Committee in the autumn;
- Noted the 3 main themes of the Framework around Greening, Retrofit and Active Travel, and how the UP2030 project could be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities about Net Zero as well as integrate and inform both local community plans and Council workstreams such as the emerging area planning approach; climate-related work programmes; housing led regeneration programme and specifically how it would fit with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans; and
- Noted that an update report on UP2030 was also being presented to the Climate and City Resilience Committee on 16th January, 2025.

**Correspondence from the Department for
Infrastructure - Public Transport Fares**

The Committee considered correspondence which had been received from the Department for Infrastructure, in response to the Committee request for the Minister to consider reducing the cost of public transport fares over the Christmas period.

Noted.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Gary Moore Statue (Councillor Smyth to raise)

Councillor Smyth advised that he had been liaising with the Wild Frontier Memorial Trust in relation to the potential for a Gary Moore Statue to be installed in Belfast. He advised that the Trust proposed to fund the statue to celebrate Mr. Moore's contribution to blues and rock, inspire future generations of musicians and encourage tourism.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the Council explore land availability for the possible installation of a Gary Moore statue within the Cathedral Quarter and that the item be referred to the City Hall/City Hall Grounds Installations Working Group for further consideration.

Chairperson

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Wednesday, 29th January, 2025

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY GROWTH AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nelson (Chairperson);
Alderman Lawlor;
Councillors Black, D. Douglas, Duffy,
Harvey, Kelly, Lyons, Maskey, F. McAteer,
McCabe, McDonough-Brown, McDowell, McKay,
I. McLaughlin, R. McLaughlin and O'Neill.

In attendance: Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance;
Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee 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 items, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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 2025/26

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 2025/26.

The Director of Finance presented an overview of the budgetary pressures facing the Council in 2025/26 and outlined that the paper should not be subject to call-in as it

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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, 2025.

He reported the cash limit for the Committee for 2025/26 as recommended by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on the 27th January, 2025 and outlined the next steps in the rate setting process leading to the setting of the rate by Council at its meeting in February, 2025.

Proposal

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

Resolved – That the Committee agrees to adopt the recommendations contained within the report.

Accordingly, the Committee:

- i. agreed a cash limit of £22,897,361 for the City Growth and Regeneration Committee for 2025/26 and the individual service estimates detailed in the report;
- ii. agreed that this decision would not be subject to call-in, given that 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, 2025; and
- iii. noted the next steps in the rate setting process.

Chairperson

Licensing Committee

Wednesday, 22nd January, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE LICENSING COMMITTEE

- Members present: Alderman Rodgers (Chairperson);
Alderman McCullough;
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bradley,
T. Brooks, Collins, M. Donnelly, P. Donnelly,
Doran, D. Douglas, Kelly, McCann, McDowell,
McKay, McKeown and O Néill.
- In attendance: Mr. K. Bloomfield, HMO Manager;
Mr. S. Hewitt, Building Control Manager;
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning); and
Mrs. L. McLornan, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors McAteer and Smyth.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 11th December, 2024 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 9th January, 2025, 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.

Non-Delegated Matters

Issue raised in advance by a Member – “Know your rights” information campaign for HMOs – Councillor McKay to raise

Councillor McKay requested that officers would seek to provide students who were attending universities and regional colleges with information on their rights in relation to leasing a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO).

After some discussion, during which the HMO Manager explained that it might also be helpful to provide information to both students and to landlords of their rights and responsibilities in regards to HMOs, the Committee agreed that officers would:

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 22nd January, 2025**

1. engage with Corporate Communications in order to update the Council's website with additional and specific guidance for students and landlords in respect of their rights and responsibilities regarding Houses in Multiple Occupation;
2. post links to that information through a social media campaign, linking in with the universities, regional colleges and Students' Unions;
3. provide guidance, with a QR code linking to the information online, highlighting the rights and responsibilities, to be circulated to landlords for them to provide to their new tenants;
4. consider the budget requirement for an enhanced information campaign from financial year 2025/26 onwards; and
5. seek to provide information on HMOs across Northern Ireland, rather than just for the City of Belfast.

Delegated Matters

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

**Houses in Multiple Occupation (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 2024.

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 a Licence to operate a House
of Multiple Occupation for 15 Agincourt Street**

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 20th November, 2024, it had heard the details of the application from Mr. Macauley to operate a House in Multiple Occupation at 15 Agincourt Street. At that meeting, the Committee had agreed to defer consideration of the application to enable officers to explore some of the issues which had been raised in relation to the application, particularly relating to property ownership and the previous licence application, and to present the information at a future meeting.

The HMO Manager explained that the property had had the benefit of an HMO Registration issued by the Housing Executive with a commencement date of 2nd June, 2014, in the name of Mr. John Macauley with an expiry date of 2nd June, 2019.

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 22nd January, 2025**

Registrations issued by the NIHE became licences on 1st April, 2019, by virtue of the Transitional Provisions Order 2019.

On 19th April, 2019, an application was received from Ms. Mary Macauley which was subsequently granted in her name with an expiry date of 2nd June, 2024. In discussions prior to the introduction of the Houses in Multiple Occupation Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 ("2016 Act"), the Department for Social Development (now the Department for Communities) had expressed the view that regulation that was disproportionate and unduly onerous could impact costs, increased rents, and ultimately deter some HMO owners from applying for HMO licenses, putting occupiers at risk. It was therefore decided at that time that for renewal applications, proof of ownership from a solicitor or financial institution would not be required and would be based on a self-declaration in the application form. The Committee was advised that the NIHMO Unit carried out a 10% random check of HMO ownership.

The HMO licence had been granted to Ms. Macauley based on the self-declaration contained in the application form.

The Committee was advised that on 8th May, 2024, an application was received from Mr. John Macauley, and confirmation was received from his solicitor that Mrs. Macauley never owned the accommodation and ownership had been in the sole name of Mr. Macauley since 29th July, 2005.

Mr. Macauley submitted that, having regard to the specific circumstances of his application, the Council should exercise discretion and treat his application as a renewal. Senior Counsel's advice was sought and, having considered same, legal services had advised that, while it was not a straightforward area of interpretation, given the particular circumstances of the application, and in order to give effect to the proper legislative intent of the 2016 Act, as well as the need to avoid the Council being left vulnerable to Judicial Review challenge, the application should be considered a renewal of the existing licence.

The HMO Manager emphasised that the outcome was therefore not to exercise a discretion but to give effect to the true meaning of section 20 of the 2016 Act, given the particular circumstances of the case.

He outlined, therefore, that he was recommending that the Committee grant the application, as a renewal, in the terms applied for.

In response to a Member's question, the HMO Manager confirmed to the Committee that, from 1st April 2025, proof of title would be required with all HMO licence applications.

The Committee, having considered the legal advice provided in respect of the specific circumstances of the application, and noting that it should be treated as a renewal and not a new application, agreed to grant the licence to Mr. Macauley to operate a House of Multiple Occupation for 15 Agincourt Street.

**Licensing Committee,
Wednesday, 22nd January, 2025**

**Application for the Variation of 7-Day Annual
Entertainments Licence for Revolucion de Cuba**

The Committee noted that the application had been withdrawn by the applicant prior to the meeting.

Chairperson

Planning Committee

Tuesday, 21st January, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Carson (Chairperson);
Aldermen Lawlor, McCullough and Rodgers;
Councillors Abernethy, Anglin, Bell, Brennan,
T. Brooks, Doran, S. Douglas, Ferguson, Garrett,
Groogan, Hanvey, McCabe, McCann and Murphy

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. K. McDonnell, Solicitor (Regulatory and Planning);
Mr. E. Baker, Planning Manager (Development Management),
Mr. D. O'Kane, Planning Manager (Plans and Policy)
Ms. L. Walshe, Principal Planning Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

No apologies for inability to attend were reported.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 10th December, 2024 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council, at its meeting on 9th January, 2025, subject to the omission of those matters in respect of which the Council had delegated its powers to the Committee.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Murphy declared an interest in relation to item 10b - LA04/2024/0754/F - Retrospective application for the construction of a landscaped earth mound, new fencing, and the reconfiguration of internal access arrangements and car parking associated with film studios granted under planning permission ref: LA04/2020/0474/F (as amended under LA04/2021/1358/F). (Amended description and plans) - Lands immediately north and south of existing film studios, north of Dargan Road (within wider Belfast City Council lands known as North Foreshore/Giants Park), in that he was a Board Member of Belfast Harbour Commissioners.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 21st January, 2025**

Withdrawn Items

The Committee noted that the following items had been withdrawn from the agenda:

- Proposed adoption of SPG on Purpose Built and Managed Student Accommodation (PBMSA) including report on Public Consultation of Draft SPG for notation;
- Public Local Inquiry for the Dalradian Gold Application; and
- LA04/2024/1744/LBC - Installation of metal gates to the Titanic Memorial Garden at the ground of Belfast City Hall - Belfast City Hall, 2 Donegall Square North.

Committee Site Visits

Note of Committee Site Visits

The Committee noted the site visits.

Schedule of Committee Site Visits

The Committee agreed the proposed schedule of site visits.

Notifications of Abandonment and Extinguishment

**Notifications from Statutory Bodies –
24 Summerhill Drive and Hopewell Crescent**

The Committee noted the notifications of extinguishment.

Planning Appeals Notified

The Committee noted the appeals decisions.

Planning Decisions Issued

The Committee noted the planning decisions issued in December, 2024.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 21st January, 2025**

Live applications for Major Development

The Committee noted the list of live applications for major development.

Committee Decisions yet to issue

The Committee noted the list of Committee decisions which had not yet been issued.

Miscellaneous Reports

**Advanced Notice of Listed Buildings - Ardleevan
180 Upper Malone Rd; Ardleevan 178 Upper
Malone Rd; 17 Notting Hill; 2 Malone Hill Park;
and 6 Malone Hill Park**

The Planning Manager informed the Committee that correspondence had been received from the Historic Environment Division (HED) regarding the proposed listing of the following properties:

- Ardleevan 180 Upper Malone Rd;
- Ardleevan 178 Upper Malone;
- 17 Notting Hill;
- 2 Malone Hill Park; and
- 6 Malone Hill Park.

The Committee noted the content of the report and supported the proposed listings.

Delegation of Local applications subject to a NIW objection

The Committee agreed to delegate to the Director of Planning and Building Control those Local planning applications to which NI Water had objected.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 21st January, 2025**

LA04/2021/1808/F - Proposed residential development comprising of 14 dwellings, access from Lagmore View Lane and Lagmore Glen, completion of remaining areas of open space (including hard and soft landscaping), provision of parking bays and speed cushions to improve road safety along Lagmore View Road, and all associated site works. - Lands South and East of 148-163 Lagmore View Lane North and West of 37, 81, 82 and 112 Lagmore Glen and Lagmore View Road, Belfast. Proposed amendment to tenure of affordable housing.

The Planning Manager summarised the application for a proposed change to tenure and explained that the application had been approved by the Committee at its meeting in September, 2023, whereby plots 168, 179 and 179a were required to be delivered as co-ownership affordable housing. He stated that plots 179 and 179a had been valued at £210k which exceeded the £195k value limit for co-ownership housing and could not therefore be delivered as such.

He reported that the applicant had been in discussion with Arbour Housing Association with regard to delivering plots 168, 179 and 179a as social rented housing in response to the significant unmet need for social housing in the area.

He explained that, in order to facilitate the change in tenure, it would be necessary to amend the Section 76 planning agreement which stipulated that the three dwellings should be delivered as co-ownership housing. He stated that the change in tenure would still secure 21% affordable housing which was compliant with Policy HOU5 of the Plan Strategy and was considered acceptable and he recommended that the application be approved.

The Committee approved the change in tenure of the three affordable housing units from Co-Ownership Housing to social rented housing and delegated authority for the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the amended Section 76 planning agreement, including consideration of the trigger point and appropriateness of a long-stop date for delivery of the three affordable housing units.

Planning Applications previously considered

LA04/2022/2103/F - Proposed change of use and redevelopment of the existing waste management facility and adjoining plant hire business to create a new waste disposal installation for the incineration of healthcare and hazardous waste streams and associated works. - 1 and 2 Duncrue Pass

The Planning Manager outlined the application to the Committee and highlighted the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of development;
- Natural Heritage and Impact on ecology;
- Impact on water / marine environment;
- Design, layout and visual impact;
- Impact on amenity and environmental health;
- Access, parking and transport;
- Flood risk; and
- Waste infrastructure.

He reported that the proposed facility would undertake the incineration of healthcare, hazardous and other waste and that the waste streams would be controlled through the Pollution Prevention Control (PPC) permit which was administered by DAERA NIEA. He stated that the proposal was an on-island solution and would be an alternative to shipping waste to Great Britain or Europe.

He stated that the proposed facility would have a capacity of 20,000 tonnes of waste per annum and that the island of Ireland generated around 43,000 tonnes of clinical waste annually, 13,000 tonnes in Northern Ireland and 30,000 tonnes in the Republic of Ireland. He added that the PCC permit would cap the facilities capacity to 20,000 tonnes.

The Planning Manager stated that the facility could generate up to 10MW in heat which could convert to 1-2MW of electricity and that, in order of priority, the applicant intended that the primary energy use would be as a local heat supply, then local energy source and, finally, exported to the National Grid.

He explained that, following the submission of further information, DAERA and SES had offered no objection to the proposal and that it was recommended that the application be approved, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Ms. G. Jobling, JPE Planning and Mr. G. Blacklock, SLR Consultant, to the meeting, who attended on behalf of the applicant.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Tuesday, 21st January, 2025**

Ms. Jobling explained that the proposal represented a vital upgrade to the existing waste management facility that would transform it to a specialised installation for the incineration of healthcare and hazardous waste streams.

She stated that the proposal was compliant with all relevant planning policies and would address critical infrastructure gap in Northern Ireland. She explained that, in addition to treating waste, the facility would generate renewable energy which could be used directly by industries in the Duncrue area for heating or refrigeration or, alternatively, could be converted to electricity and supplied to local businesses.

Ms. Jobling stated that significant research had underpinned the application which supported the principles of self-sufficiency and environmental stewardship whilst enhancing Northern Ireland's waste infrastructure. She informed the Committee that the proposed facility would generate local high value jobs, support nearby businesses with energy recovery in the form of heat and electricity that would contribute to Belfast's leadership in sustainable waste management solutions.

She concluded by stating that the project was a forward thinking response to a pressing infrastructure need and explaining that environmental and technical assessments had demonstrated that the development would not adversely affect human health, ecology or air and water quality.

After discussion it was

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Brennan, and

Resolved - "That the Committee approves the application, subject to conditions, to include the addition of a condition to prevent the import of waste from outside the island of Ireland and delegates authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the conditions, and deal with any other matters that might arise prior to issuing the decision, provided that they are not substantive."

Accordingly, the amendment was thereupon put to the meeting as the substantive motion.

LA04/2024/1623/F - Change of use from 4 bed dwelling (C1) to 5 bed House of Multiple Occupancy (Sui Generis) - 49 Woodcot Avenue

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the application so that late items and amended recommendation could be set out in an updated report.

New Planning Applications

LA04/2024/0714/F - Proposed development to create a private medical facility (a hospital within Class C3) comprising of the change of use of part of retail warehouse and the extension of the building to create a private medical facility with a significant element of overnight residential care together with all associated ancillary development. - Units 2A and 2B at 38 Boucher Road

The Planning Manager provided the Committee with an overview of the application and outlined the following key issues for consideration:

- Principle of development;
- Visual impact of the proposed redevelopment;
- Impact on character of the area;
- Impact on transport infrastructure and road safety;
- Flood risk/drainage;
- Health impacts;
- Environmental impact;
- Climate change;
- Employability and skills;
- Section 76 planning agreement; and
- Pre-application community consultation.

He stated that the application site was partially located within whiteland and an area zoned for industry and commerce within the Belfast Urban Area Plan (BUAP) and whiteland in the Draft Belfast Metropolitan Area Plan 2015.

He reported that NI Water had been the only consultee to object to the proposal and that the application had been advertised and neighbour notified and that no objections had been received.

He stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal had been considered acceptable and he recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr. M. Worthington, Pragma Planning, and Mr. R. Irwin, Norlin Ventures, attending on behalf of the applicant, to the meeting.

Mr. Worthington thanked the Council's Planning Service which he stated had dealt with issues promptly and professionally and that by processing the major application within seven months demonstrated what could be achieved through collaborative working between the private and public sectors.

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Tuesday, 21st January, 2025**

He explained that the applicant was content with the proposed conditions and highlighted that there had been no third-party objections to the proposal.

The Committee agreed to grant planning permission, subject to conditions 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 from outstanding consultees.

LA04/2024/0754/F - Retrospective application for the construction of a landscaped earth mound, new fencing, and the reconfiguration of internal access arrangements and car parking associated with film studios granted under planning permission ref: LA04/2020/0474/F (as amended under LA04/2021/1358/F). (Amended description and plans) - Lands immediately north and south of existing film studios, north of Dargan Road (within wider Belfast City Council lands known at North Foreshore/Giants Park)

The Principal Planning Officer provided a summary of the application to the Committee and explained that since the publication of the report, an amended description to remove reference to car-parking had been received and that a separate application to regularise the parking layout would be submitted in due course.

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 be granted, subject to conditions.

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

LA04/2024/0966/F - Retrospective: Change of use from 3-bedroom residential dwelling (C1) to short-term let (Sui Generis). Amended Plans and Description. - 28 Dunvegan Street

The Principal Planning Officer provided the Committee with an overview of the application and highlighted the following key areas for consideration:

- Principle of a change of use to short-term let at the site location;
- Policy HOU3 - Protection of existing residential accommodation;
- Policy HOU13 – Short-term let accommodation;
- Character, design and appearance; and

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- Traffic, parking and access.

She reported that DfI Roads had been consulted as the statutory consultee and had raised no objections and that five third-party objections had been received and the issue raised had been addressed within the report.

She explained that the proposal had been assessed against prevailing policy and had failed to meet two key criteria of Policy HOU13, in that the proposal was not within a tourism cluster or within 1200km of a visitor attraction and that the management arrangements were not sufficiently robust to mitigate the potential impacts of the proposal on the amenity of residents.

She reported that, since the publication of the report, an email response had been received from the applicant that elaborated on the policy compliance to be considered prior to a formal decision that contained a revised management plan, updated Tourism NI certification and a rebuttal statement from the applicant on the recommended refusal reasons and supporting information on policy compliance which cited differing walking times to the officers' desk-based study.

She stated that, having regard to the development plan and other material considerations, the proposal was considered unacceptable and that it was recommended that planning permission be refused.

The Committee refused the application and delegated authority to the Director of Planning and Building Control to finalise the wording of the reasons for refusal.

Chairperson

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Planning Committee

Wednesday, 29th January, 2025

SPECIAL HYBRID MEETING OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Carson (Chairperson);
Alderman Lawlor;
Councillors, Abernethy, Anglin, Bradley,
T. Brooks, Brennan, S. Douglas, Doran, Ferguson,
Garrett, Hanvey, Magee, McCabe and Murphy.

In attendance: Ms. K. Bentley, Director of Planning and Building Control;
Mr. T. Wallace, Director of Finance; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported for Councillor Groogan and Whyte.

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 2025/26

(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 2025/2026.

**Meeting of Planning Committee,
Wednesday, 29th January, 2025**

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, 2025.

He reported the cash limit for the Planning Committee for 2025/26 as recommended by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee at its meeting on 27th January, 2025 and outlined the next steps in the rate setting process leading to the setting of the rate by Council at its meeting in February 2025.

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

- agreed a cash limit for the Planning Committee for 2025/26 of £2,826,952 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, 2025.

Chairperson

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee

Monday, 20th January, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE BELFAST WATERFRONT AND ULSTER HALL LTD. SHAREHOLDERS' COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Ferguson (Chairperson); and
Councillors Bell, Bower, Brennan, R. Brooks, Canavan,
Collins, S. Douglas, Flynn, Maghie, McCabe, McCallin,
McCann, McDowell, McKay, Ó Néill and Verner.

In attendance: Mr. D. Martin, Strategic Director of Place and Economy;
Mrs. L. Toland, Senior Manager, Economy;
Mr. C. Campbell, Divisional Solicitor;
Mrs. C. O'Prey, Head of Audit, Governance and Risk
Services; and
Mr. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Councillor Doherty.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 19th December, 2024, were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th January.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Restricted Items

The information contained in the reports associated with the following three items are 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 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

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
Monday, 20th January, 2024

information' and that no such information should be disclosed to the public as per Paragraph 4.15 of the Code of Conduct.

Governance Overview - Presentation

The Senior Manager, Economy, reminded the Members that at its special meeting on 25th November, 2024, the Committee had agreed that an overview be provided in relation to the governance arrangements between Belfast City Council and Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. (BWUH Ltd.).

The Divisional Solicitor presented the Committee with a detailed overview of BWUH Ltd.'s status as a company and its relationship with the Council. He highlighted that BWUH Ltd. was a private limited company founded in 2016, in which the Council was a sole shareholder. He further highlighted to the Committee, that the relationship between BWUH Ltd. and the Council was governed by a Services Contract and Shareholders' Agreement, with the agreement containing a list of reserved matters that required Council approval.

The Senior Manager, Economy, provided further detail in respect of the governance relationship between the Committee, Council Departments, the BWUH Ltd. Board, and the BWUH Ltd. Management Team.

She highlighted that the Council was responsible for approving BWUH Ltd.'s Annual Business Plan and reminded the Members that the Business Plan for 2024/25 was agreed by the Committee at its meeting in January, 2024. She advised the Committee that, given the recent appointment of a new Chief Executive to BWUH Ltd., the Annual Business Plan for 2025/26 would be presented at a future meeting of the Committee.

Noted.

Governance Review - Draft Terms of Reference

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy reminded the Members that, at its meeting on 13th December, 2024, the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee had agreed that the governance arrangements between the Council and BWUH Ltd be added to the assignments to be undertaken by Audit, Governance and Risk Services.

He advised the Committee that officers had been engaging with Audit, Governance and Risk Services to define the scope of the proposed review and consider appropriate timelines. He outlined the review process, for Members information.

In response to a Member's question in respect of the review process, the Head of Audit, Governance and Risk Services advised the Members that the review would be conducted in line with the Council's established governance arrangements. She provided the Members with further information on the review process including the role of the Audit Assurance Board and the Audit and Risk Panel.

Belfast Waterfront and Ulster Hall Ltd. Shareholders' Committee
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After discussion, the Committee noted the proposed review of governance arrangements between the Council and BWUH Ltd., to be undertaken by Audit, Governance and Risk Services.

Annual Business Plan Timeline - Verbal Update

The Strategic Director of Place and Economy advised the Committee that BWUH Ltd.'s new Chief Executive would present its Annual Business Plan for 2025/26 at a future meeting of the Committee.

Noted.

Chairperson

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Climate and City Resilience Committee

Thursday, 16th January, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AND CITY RESILIENCE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor R-M Donnelly (Chairperson);
Alderman McCoubrey; and
Councillors Anglin, Bell, Bower, Brennan, R. Brooks,
T. Brooks, Bunting, Collins, Doherty, M. Donnelly,
P. Donnelly, S. Douglas, Flynn, Long, Lyons and Walsh.

In attendance: Mr. J. Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy;
Ms. D. Caldwell, Climate Commissioner;
Ms. C. Shortt, Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer;
Ms. C. Persic, Development Manager; and
Ms. C. Mealey, Committee Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported from Alderman Copeland.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 5th December, 2024 were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 9th January, 2025.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were recorded.

Presentation

Sustainable Tourism Initiatives in Belfast - Visit Belfast

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer reminded the Members that, at its meeting on 5th December, 2024, the Committee had noted that Belfast was ranked 9th place in the 2024 Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index), the highest-ranking destination in the UK and Ireland, and agreed to invite Visit Belfast to attend a future meeting of the Committee to provide an overview of the measures and initiatives which had been undertaken to achieve the high ranking.

Accordingly, Mr G. Lennon, Chief Executive, Visit Belfast, and Ms. J. Callen, Sustainability and Impact Manger, Visit Belfast, were welcomed to the meeting.

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 16th January, 2025**

Mr. Lennon provided the Committee with background information on Visit Belfast and highlighted its core purpose, namely, “to create and service visitors for Belfast and Northern Ireland in order to generate economic benefit and inclusive growth, creating jobs and prosperity for the city region, enabling Belfast to become a more sustainable place to visit, meet and live in.”

He explained that, following the Council’s declaration of a climate emergency in 2019, the launch of its Belfast Resilience Strategy Climate Plan in 2020 and the Covid-19 pandemic, Visit Belfast had committed to the development of a sustainable tourism plan. He highlighted the launch of Visit Belfast’s first Sustainability Policy and its commitment to embedding sustainability across the organisation.

Ms. Callen highlighted that, as Belfast’s Destination Management Organisation (DMO), Visit Belfast first participated in the GDS-Index in 2020, with Belfast ranking at 47th on the GDS-Index. She reported that, through improvements at pace, Belfast had made significant progress to achieve its current rank of 9th out of 100 global destinations.

She provided the Committee with a detailed overview of the actions Visit Belfast had taken in respect of sustainability, including:

- **Organisation** - launch of its three-year tourism strategy and business plan, Sustainability Policy, appointment of a dedicated Sustainability and Impact team, implementation of sustainability Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and an Annual Impact Report, and adopting a triple bottom line approach;
- **Industry** – collaboration with partners in the tourism industry that included cooperation with the Council to roll out an initiative to help tourism businesses gain independent sustainability accreditation;
- **City** – annual GDS assessment, working with the Council on the delivery of the Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Programme and the upcoming Inclusive Tourism Programme, focus on neighbourhood tourism, tourism carbon footprint measurement, and engagement with residents; and
- **Visitors and Clients** – green accommodation and active travel, cruise sustainability plan, cruise community fund, events sustainability framework, carbon measurement of business events, sustainable experiences and itineraries for tour operators and the launch of Visit Belfast’s Impact and Legacy guide.

She highlighted the following initiatives:

- **Change the Menu. For Good** – a project in collaboration with industry partners to raise funds and supplies for those experiencing food poverty in Belfast;

**Climate and City Resilience Committee,
Thursday, 16th January, 2025**

- **Belfast Reusable Cup** – a 12-month pilot aimed at eliminating 2 million single use plastic cups in entertainment venues in Belfast; and
- **Educational Outreach** – an initiative in collaboration with the Education Authority to help students benefit from incoming conferences to Belfast.

In response to a Member's question regarding carbon offsetting initiatives, Ms. Callen informed the Committee that Visit Belfast, through its Impact and Legacy Guide, provided clients and tourists with offsetting options. She highlighted Visit Belfast's recent work with the Association of Surgeons of Great Britain and Ireland (ASGBI) to calculate the carbon footprint of the ASGBI conference in Belfast.

Ms. Callen answered a range of questions from Members, including Visit Belfast's engagement with Belfast Harbour in relation to the reduction of cruise ship emissions, sustainability certified hotel bedrooms, energy reduction targets, the Reusable Cup pilot, and tour buses emissions.

The Chairperson thanked Mr. Lennon and Ms. Callen for their attendance and the work that had been undertaken in respect of sustainable tourism.

The Committee noted the contents of the presentation.

**Business in the Community's 2024 Northern Ireland
Environmental Benchmarking Survey Results**

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To update members on the recent Gold award to Belfast City Council in the 2024 Business in the Community, Environmental Benchmarking Survey (up from Silver in 2023).

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is requested to note the 2024 award and agree to submission to the 2025 survey.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Background - 2024 Business in the Community, Environmental Benchmarking Survey

3.2 In July 2023, the Council made it's first annual submission to the Business in the Community, Environmental Benchmarking Survey. The submission was undertaken to support baselining of environmental activity in the organisation and to benchmark Belfast City Council to other organisations in the region. It also demonstrates publicly our commitments to being

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environmentally responsible and transparent and helps us to track our progress over time and see how far we have come. Last year Council scored a silver award.

3.3 The Survey is Northern Ireland’s leading environmental benchmarking exercise. It is a free, annual, self-disclosure exercise open to members and non-members of Business in the Community. There are five levels of awards ranging from Platinum at the top through Gold, Silver, Bronze and Green. The Survey is split into the following sections:

CORPORATE STRATEGY	ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT	ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE & IMPROVEMENT	BONUS	
18	10	72	3	Scores available
	Environmental Management Systems	Climate Emergency	Bonus	
Strategic Decision Making	Policy	Circular Economy and Resource Use		
	Issues	Additional Impact		
Leadership	Legislation	Nature and Biodiversity		
	Objective	Environmental Performance & Improvement		
Stakeholder Engagement	Targets	Assurance		
17	10	35.5	3	Small Business Scores available

3.4 132 organisations took part in the survey this year, a 9% increase from 2023. Belfast City Council scored 79% against an average of 76%. The areas that received full marks this year and therefore helped achieve the gold award were around strategic decision making (for example the inclusion of a large programme of work on climate and environment under the ‘Our Planet’ section in the Belfast Agenda), leadership (the establishment of the Our Planet Board, City Resilience and Climate Committee, and Belfast Climate Commission) and publically reporting to the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). The staff travel survey also demonstrated the Council’s commitment to measuring scope 3 emissions and the development of the council’s draft Climate Action Plan (CAP) helped move the organisation up a level in the results. Recycling of old laptops, participation in the All-Ireland

Pollinator Plan and the recent work around single use plastics also gained positive marks.

- 3.5 Organisations also receive a Gap Analysis Report that provides feedback on its score in each section, enabling us to identify areas where action can be taken to improve environmental impacts and increase future scores in subsequent Surveys.
- 3.6 One of the areas that the gap analysis highlighted for improvement was around the council's use of renewable energy. This year funding secured from the shared island fund will be used to install solar panels on the Donegal Pass community centre (plans for procurement in January 2025).
- 3.7 There were several changes to the Survey questions this year, scored and unscored, to continue to challenge participants included an increased focus on commitments, policies or actions in place to maintain, enhance and conserve nature and biodiversity.
- 3.8 There are three other councils that participate in the survey - Mid and East Antrim (platinum), Antrim and Newtownabbey (Gold) and Ards and North Down (Silver) and other organisations such as the Belfast Met (Gold), Ulster University (Platinum) and Visit Belfast (Bronze). Many organisations such as the Belfast Harbour Commission, International Airport and George Best City Airport have been participating in the survey for more than 20 years and are now in the platinum category.
- 4.0 **Financial & Resource Implications**
- 4.1 There are no financial and resource implications.
- 5.0 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications**
- 5.1 **Any good relations or equality implications will be identified as part of the Council's screening process."**

In response to a Member's question in respect of energy reduction, the Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer advised the Committee that the feedback received from the Survey, through its Gap Analysis Report, enabled the Council to identify areas for improvement, including the use of renewable energy. She highlighted the current improvements being made through the Council's Net Zero Pathfinder Project and the Local Area Energy Plan.

The Monitoring, Learning and Reporting Officer informed the Members that the Council was in the process of completing energy audits of its highest energy consuming buildings, and that the results would be reported to the Committee.

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After discussion, the Committee:

- i. noted the Council's gold award in the Business in the Community 2024 Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey Report; and
- ii. agreed that the Council submit to the Business in the Community 2025 Northern Ireland Environmental Benchmarking Survey.

UP2030 Update - Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

1.1 To provide an update on the UP2030 Net Zero (NZ) Neighbourhood Framework, including the work to date across the priority themes of active travel, greening and retrofit, stakeholder engagement, and key milestones for 2025, including holding a Members briefing workshop.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 The Committee is asked to:

- I. To note the progress to date and future key milestones for the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Horizon Europe funded project to develop a Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework.**
- II. To note that a Members' briefing workshop in early summer on the emerging draft Framework prior to taking the final draft Framework to Committee in the autumn.**
- III. To note the 3 main themes of the Framework around Greening, Retrofit and Active Travel, and how the UP2030 project can be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities about NZ as well as integrate and inform both local community plans and Council workstreams such as the emerging area planning approach; climate-related work programmes; housing led regeneration programme and specifically how it will fit with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans.**
- IV. To note that an update report on UP2030 was brought to the City Growth & Regeneration Committee yesterday, 15 January 2025.**

3.0 Background

Members will recall that Council is involved in a three-year Horizon Europe consortium programme called Urban Planning 2030 (UP2030) that aims to guide cities through the transitions required to meet their climate neutrality ambitions. The City Regeneration and Development and Climate teams were successful in joint bid of €204,250/£176,024 to further an integrated approach between urban planning, achieving net zero and aspects of resilience. At the most recent update to the City Regeneration & Development and Climate and City Resilience Committees in June 2024 Members were reminded that Belfast is one of 11 pilot cities, and the focus of the project is on the development of a net zero neighbourhood framework around three thematic areas: active travel, greening and retrofit. These themes link across to the UP2030 pillars of a fair and just transition, carbon neutrality and resilience. The Framework will be informed by data, stakeholder engagement and the use of climate tools to support analysis, mapping and engagement in the pilot area.

- 3.1 The geographic area of the UP2030 pilot was agreed at the City Growth and Regeneration Committee in March 2023 and covers the Linen Quarter and surrounding city centre communities of Barrack Street, Sandy Row, Donegall Pass and the Market. Whilst this work was undertaken within a defined boundary the purpose was to produce a framework that could be adapted and used within all communities and districts to set forward net zero tailored approaches, attract funding and deliver climate adaption plans tailored for the uses of that specific district.
- 3.2 Over the past year and a half there has been engagement with communities and wider city partners at each key stage. Members received an update at the CG&R and Climate and City Resilience Committees in June 2024 that outlined the stakeholder engagement, workshops, key milestones and highlighted wider alignment of the UP2030 programme with other workstreams such as the Solar PV Study and the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub.

4.0 Main Report

4.1 Progress to date

Cross-sector stakeholder engagement

As reported in June 2024, stakeholder engagement has been a key feature of the programme, and the team continue to engage with the local areas as well as thematic, statutory, and citywide

partners that have broad experience or are prospective delivery partners. Between April and October 2024 significant engagement took place through workshops and interactive sessions with a range of cross-sector stakeholders including:

- **Belfast City Council officers across departments**
- **Connectivity, Active and Sustainable Travel (CAST) Belfast Agenda subgroup**
- **City Greening Group**
- **Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub**
- **Cross sector stakeholder Vision and Actions feedback workshop**
- **Youth session with South Belfast Alternatives Youth Group**
- **QUB StreetSpace engagement and research group**
- **Donegall Pass Seniors' Group**
- **Open Botanic Festival**
- **Retrofit workshop with elected Members**
- **World Cities Day Youth Event with BCC Youth Council**

4.2 The purpose of these events was to encourage people to step into the future and consider what life might be like in a NZ Belfast of 2050 and gain agreement on the vision for the project across the three themes (greening, active travel and retrofit) as well as to engage in 'climate conversations' to build awareness and understanding of climate change. During the sessions, participants were presented with mapped geospatial analysis data and the insights gathered on the project to date and asked for feedback on the emerging Framework ideas, local priorities and build a shared understanding of NZ options. Through this we were able to sense check the emerging framework ideas, build a shared understanding of NZ options and agreed the adaptive pathways for the short/long term sequence of actions that would be required to support the transition as well as explore opportunities for pilot projects to help test concepts for the NZ Framework alongside continued stakeholder engagement.

4.3 There have also been indirect engagement opportunities that have helped to build knowledge and expand networks which will also help to inform the Framework. For example, a session was held with the Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub with energy managers from public and private sector with large scale estates to share experience on retrofitting buildings to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. Belfast Retrofit Delivery Hub hosted a peer-to-peer exchange with the Galway City Council, the Warm Homes Hub community retrofit programme and a variety of interested stakeholders from Belfast to explore their One Stop Shop approach and retrofit methodology. This is part of the ongoing work of the Climate Team and demonstrates

the importance of linking the shared learning and feedback into the NZ Framework.

4.4 Building out the Framework

The UP2030 team have consolidated the feedback to date on the emerging vision and thematic adaptive pathways, data and worked with consortium partners on the format and content of the Framework. Sections one to three of the draft Framework are due for submission to the UP2030 Consortium in February 2025 and is based around the following chapter outline:

Preface

- 1. Introduction and Context**
- 2. Neighbourhood Assessment**
- 3. Vision and Adaptive Pathways**
- 4. Pilots and What We Tested**
- 5. Lessons Learned**
- 6. Net Zero Neighbourhood**
- 7. Implementation and Recommendations**
- 8. Outputs and Visual Aids**
 - **Report Document: Comprehensive overview**
 - **Visual Guides: Posters, infographics on achieving net-zero by 2050**
 - **Glossary**

4.5 Pending feedback from the UP2030 Consortium on the draft Framework, the intention is to go back out to stakeholders in late Spring/early Summer to sense check the actions within the emerging final draft and explore dissemination. As part of this, it also proposed to hold a Members' briefing workshop in early summer that will provide an opportunity to input into the Framework and explore the themes prior to bringing this to Committee for approval in the autumn. It is proposed to invite Members from City Growth & Regeneration, Climate & City Resilience and Members who represent the UP2030 area. The final Framework must be submitted by November 2025.

4.6 Primarily, the target audience for the Framework is decision makers and policy makers in local and central government, statutory partners, communities and urban practitioners. As part of the legacy of the project, officers are considering how it will be of use to key stakeholders and looking at this through 'personae' such as a community group, investors, senior public officials, or a thematic or special interest organisation. The value of taking this approach means that officers will be able to structure and tailor the content of the Framework, so that it is accessible and

relevant to the core audiences and assist in the dissemination of the material.

4.7 Action Phase: Testing Net Zero options

Alongside the drafting of the Framework, the UP2030 team is in the Action Phase of the programme, which focuses on testing options that could be included in the NZ Framework under the three themes, active travel, greening and retrofit. The exploration of solutions is central to the action phase of the programme wherein we need to trial approaches or actions that can help us achieve NZ whilst also providing an opportunity to engage with citizens on the key themes of the project. The piloting of these approaches helps us to capture lessons learned and recommendations that will form part of the final NZ Framework as well as gaining a better understanding of the capacity building and knowledge exchange required to help communities transition together. Through this period officers have continued to engage with stakeholders, delivery partners and tool providers to solidify partnerships that will help test some of the NZ approaches that are in the emerging draft Framework. Included in this action phase is a pilot Walking Bus project that will be funded and delivered by Belfast Healthy Cities by March 2025. A Walking Bus is a group of children walking to school together in the morning. They are supported by an adult at the front and at the back of the group, acting as the 'driver' and 'conductor' of the walking bus.

4.8 Additionally, a Walking Bus is an action in the Belfast Agenda CAST Action Plan and is an approach that was suggested by communities during the UP2030 engagement period. This pilot draws upon the expertise of one of the consortium tool providers, Design Clips, who are an architectural practice specialising in participatory planning and placemaking with a focus on co-design with children, and Belfast Healthy Cities, who are currently working with schools to deliver walking buses. Adding to the Walking Bus concept, a toolkit and teacher training materials have been developed encouraging children to 'audit' their route to school and considering how their neighbourhood could be cleaner, greener and healthier, creating safe routes and healthy places. Further to the pilot, this toolkit (including a Walking Bus toolkit, teaching materials and activity materials) will be a free resource for any school or community in Belfast and is an example of how the UP2030 NZ approach can be scaled up in other areas.

4.9 Similarly, it was agreed in the Climate and City Resilience Committee in June 2024 to support Royal Society of Ulster Architects (RSUA) with their Early Career Architects proposal to

run a Net-Zero Neighbourhood Ideas Competition as a partnership between the (RSUA) and JP Corry with support from the NIHE and the Northern Ireland Construction Group (NICG). This work is ongoing and intends to explore how a holistic neighbourhood approach to lowering carbon emissions compares to a more focused property-by-property approach and is an opportunity to build on the visioning outcomes of the retrofit work and importantly, engage with communities in the pilot area to codesign approaches for net zero delivery and contribute to the development of the NZ Framework and consider how it can be replicated in other areas.

- 4.10 Increasingly, new technology comes forward to help address carbon emissions and within the greening theme, we are completing a cost/benefit exercise on the planting and maintenance of 44 trees in the AQMA of Cromac Street in comparison to the installation of a technical solution, 'CityTree', which claims to achieve the benefit equivalent in cleansing the air. This exercise builds on the work of the 'Tree Establishment Strategy' survey completed by colleagues in City and Neighbourhood Services which has identified existing canopy cover across the city and highlighted much needed tree planting in areas that have the lowest tree canopy cover, and subsequent lowest tree equity scores and the UP2030 pilot area includes some of the highest priority areas of the city.

4.11 Key milestones for 2025

The final output of the UP2030 programme is a NZ Framework that will be an interactive pdf, supplemented by user-friendly information that can also be distributed to communities and other stakeholders. However, central to this project is how the learning is embedded and helps Council and partners adapt and prepare for climate change. The dissemination will take different forms and officers will the publish and promote the material in different formats, engage with communities and engage across Council teams and seek to influence wider city and regional stakeholders. The final output is being developed with target audiences in mind that includes decision makers, urban practitioners and community leaders. It is hoped that the Framework will help these audiences to understand what a transition to net zero could look like through the three themes, and the urgency of sequenced actions required.

- 4.12 The UP2030 programme concludes in December 2025. Below are the high-level milestones and deliverables for the year:

- Ongoing roll out of demonstration projects as part of the Action Phase, i.e. Walking Bus, RSUA Early Career Architects NZ Neighbourhood Ideas Competition
- Submission of the draft Framework by February 2025
- Engage in consortium upscaling workshops and with tool providers, including utilisation of the financial and governance toolkit and peer-to-peer learning, and provision of material/content.
- Stakeholder and Member engagement to sense check and validate the NZ Framework, May-June
- Submission of final Framework and reporting to the UP2030 Consortium in November 2025
- Launch and dissemination December 2025 and ongoing into 2026.

5.0 Financial and Resource Implications

Members will be aware that given that the UK is no longer within the EU, the status of Council was changed from to being a Partner to that of an Associate which means that funding is underwritten by the UK government (UK Research & Innovation, UKRI) fund rather than the EU. The Horizon Europe UP2030 Project is 100% funded for revenue only. No additional funding is required from Council however a small team drawn from the Climate Unit and City Regeneration and Development work together to oversee development and support implementation. Officers continue to work with partners to identify potential capital or revenue funding in the future and align current and emerging workstreams that could support the transition to net zero.

6.0 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

Officers will carry on an Equality Screening on the final NZ Framework and will incorporate within the emerging proposals.”

The Development Manager answered a range of questions from Members in relation to tree equity and CityTrees, Belfast’s partnership with other UP2030 pilot cities, the use of artificial intelligence in relation to research, and commuter parking and its impact on air quality.

After discussion, the Committee noted:

- i. the progress to date and future key milestones for the UP2030 Net Zero Neighbourhoods Horizon Europe funded project to develop a Net Zero Neighbourhood Framework;

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- ii. that a Members' briefing workshop would be held in early summer on the emerging draft Framework prior to taking the final draft Framework to Committee in the autumn;
- iii. the three main themes of the Framework around Greening, Retrofit and Active Travel, and how the UP2030 project can be upscaled to help build understanding and capacity for communities about Net Zero as well as integrate and inform both local community plans and Council workstreams such as the emerging area planning approach; climate-related work programmes; housing led regeneration programme and specifically how it will fit with the Belfast Agenda Community Planning Boards Action Plans; and
- iv. that an update report on UP2030 was brought to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee on 15 January, 2025.

Chairperson

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