

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 4th February, 2025

HYBRID MEETING OF THE PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

- Members present: Councillor R. Brooks (Chairperson);
Councillors Abernethy, Bell, Black, Bower,
Bradley, Bunting, Canavan, Cobain, M. Donnelly,
R-M Donnelly, Flynn, Garrett, Magee, 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 Doherty.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 14th and 29th January were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that the minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 3rd February, subject to an amendment to the minute under the heading 'Parks Opening Hours – Consultations' in that the Council agreed that officers would investigate the feasibility of adding the Botanic Gardens those the parks within the scope of the consultation exercise.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Black declared an interest in item 5 (d), 'Independently Managed Community Centres', in that she was the manager of Grosvenor Recreation Centre. Councillor I. McLaughlin declared an interest in the same item in that he was a member of the committee of Denmark Street Community Centre. Both Members left the meeting whilst the item was under consideration.

Matter referred back by the Council/Notices of Motion

Notice of Motion - Vital Role of Trees

The Committee considered the above-mentioned notice of motion which, in accordance with Standing Order 13 (f), had been referred for consideration by the Standards and Business Committee at its meeting on 7th January.

The Committee agreed to adopt the undernoted motion, which was moved at the meeting by Councillor Abernethy and seconded by Councillor Maghie. The wording below the original motion (in bold), which was proposed in addition by Councillor Abernethy, was, with the permission of the Committee, added to the original motion:

"This Council recognises the vital role of trees in enhancing the health and well-being of people and communities, addressing climate change, and supporting biodiversity; commits to raising awareness among residents about these benefits and to actively support efforts to plant and protect the right trees in the right places and for the right reasons, ensuring that everyone can share in the benefits trees provide; and, will commit to exploring how we can educate and raise awareness of trees, the role they play in all our lives across Belfast."

In addition, the Committee agrees that officers would submit a report which would provide the following:

- ***an update on the Tree Strategy, including the 'One Million Trees' initiative;***
- ***seek to identify sites within the Council's estate where additional trees and plant could be maintained; and***
- ***an outline as to how communities and electoral areas could become involved further in the life of trees in our city."***

Notices of Motion – Update

The Committee considered a report which provided an update on the notices of motion/issues raised in advance which had been referred to it for consideration. It was reported that there were 42 active matters which fell under the Committee's remit, an overview in respect of which was appended to the report. The Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services spoke to the report and gave an overview of 14 specific items and outlined the actions which had been taken to date to address the proposals contained therein.

Moved by Councillor Flynn,
Seconded by Councillor Maghie and

Resolved – that the Committee agrees to the closure of 14 notices of motion/issues raised in advance, as outlined in the associated report, with the exception of item 363, viz., 'Biodiversity in the Council's Parks and Open Spaces', to enable further work to be undertaken, particularly regarding the habitat and species selection of the trees to be used in the implementation of the Council's biodiversity programme.

Restricted Matter

The information contained in the reports 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 item as,

due to the nature of the item, 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.

**Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium
Working Group – Update**

The Committee considered a report in the above-mentioned matter and agreed to approve the minutes of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group of 15th January, and to the following course of action:

- that the pilot events at Friar's Bush would continue as outlined;
and
- that historic cemeteries would be added to the capital programme as an emerging project and that further considerations would be explored by the relevant departments.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Best Kept Awards - Request for Funding

The Director of Resources, Fleet, Open Spaces and Streetscene reminded the Committee that the Best Kept Awards were administered annually by the Northern Ireland Amenity Council. At present, he added, the Council provided funding to the awards in the sum of £2,300, a figure which had remained unchanged since 2015. He reported that correspondence had been received from the organisers requesting that Committee consider, given prevailing budgetary and inflationary pressures, increasing its contribution to £3,000 for the financial year 2025/26.

The Committee acceded to the request.

Arising from discussion, in response to a Member's suggestion, it was agreed, given the positive community benefits associated with the awards' scheme, that officers would endeavour to highlight the scheme amongst local communities to encourage further participation and involvement.

**Proposed Workshop - Waste Access
and Acceptance Policy**

The Committee agreed to host a workshop in this matter in the Lavery Room, City Hall, on Wednesday 5th March at 5.15 pm. It was noted that all Members of the Council would be invited to attend.

Operational Issues

Alleygates Phase 5 – Update

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Alleygate Phase V Programme.**

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1** Members are asked to note the contents of this report and approve the enacting of the legislation.

3.0 Main Report

- 3.1** Progress has been made with the commencement of the installation of Phase 5a. There had been logistical issues for the contractor in December as they attempted to get vehicles and plant to the locations due to parked cars and traffic.
- 3.2** The Notice of Intention for those streets meeting the threshold in Phase 5b was advertised on Friday 29th of November for the period of 30 days, for representations and objections.
- 3.3** There were three representations made, two regarding the locations of the gates one asking for assistance in securing an additional entrance into the alleyway. These representations have been acknowledged and resolved.
- 3.4** There were two objections received to the Phase 5b Notice of intention. One citing: Rights of way, consideration of alternatives for gates and the impact of alleyways on cyclists and the lack of cycling lane provision on street. This included a petition for cycling lanes to be implemented within the area. The second cited the location of gate to the side of the property and a perceived problem with the retrieval of bins following the installation of gates.
- 3.5** An Officer has emailed the objector in Walmer Street to inform them that cycling lanes are not the remit of Belfast City Council, however we will write to the Department for Infrastructure and consult with colleagues in the active travel unit, to highlight residents' concerns, regarding cycling within the Ormeau area. However, it is our belief that the gates will benefit the whole community at this location and assist in reducing ASB. It should be noted that the majority of those signing the petition lived outside the Walmer Street area. We have had no further correspondence from the objector.
- 3.6** A letter to the objector in Northwood Street was sent to update them that the location of the gate would be set back to a point within the alleyway beyond the low wall and out of the sight of the objector. It was also noted that we would work with our colleagues in Waste Management to overcome any issues regarding the retrieval of bins following their collections. Further correspondence was received from the objector and discussions are ongoing with them in an attempt to allay their concerns.

- 3.7 Legal Services have confirmed that the guidance for promoters of Alleygate schemes (Part 6A of the Roads (NI) Order 1993) has been followed correctly. The guidelines note “Genuine concerns of crime and ASB should generally outweigh opposition from those non-residents”; the “right of way will only be suspended rather than revoked under this legislation” and the road “facilitates crime or antisocial behaviour.” No objections have been received from service providers or any owners of cables, wires, mains, pipes, or any other apparatus and therefore do not need to hold a local inquiry, under the DfI guidance. Members should note that these objectors still could Judicially Review the process should they remain unhappy.
- 3.8 Belfast City Council are not legally required to conduct a local inquiry as no objections have been received from service providers or any owners of cables, wires, mains, pipes, or any other apparatus in accordance with the legislation and associated guidance. Furthermore, as indicated in the guidance, as most of the objections received are from persons outside the affected streets, the prevalence of crime and ASB outweighs opposition from non-residents. To this extent Officers are proposing that the gating order be enacted.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.9 All associated costs are covered within existing budget estimates.

Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.10 No Good Relations or Equality issues.”

In response to Members’ queries in relation to an estimated timescale for the installation of the gates, officers indicated that, subsequent to the enacting of the legislation, there would be an indicative timeframe of four to six months.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and agreed to the enacting of the legislation as recommended.

Summer Schemes - Additional Needs Requirements

The Committee deferred consideration of the above-mentioned report and agreed, given the limited timescales associated with delivering financial support, that a request be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee, at its meeting on 21st February, to examine existing Council underspends with a view to increasing, from £80,000 to £120,000, the sum provided to support children with additional needs attending the Council’s summer schemes in 2025.

It was noted that officers would examine existing data to identify the types of additional needs supported through the summer schemes and where the greatest need existed across the city. Officers noted also several comments which were

made in relation to the feasibility of providing funding towards personal care services within the overall funding criteria.

Community Summer Schemes

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of a report in the above-mentioned matter to enable officers to draft a further report that would examine a range of charging options/schemes for consideration, which would reflect those outlined/suggested by Members at the meeting.

It was noted that that the reconsidered report would be submitted, if deemed necessary, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee for consideration, given the associated timescales.

Independently-Managed Community Centres Funding

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 To seek authority to pay:

- **Independently Managed Community Centres (IMCCs) awards for the 2024/25 funding period**
- **An annual Consumer Price Index increase (CPI) award to IMCCs.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 That authority is given to:

- **pay annual revenue awards for the 2025/26 funding period to seven IMCC's including the annual CPI increase. Award amounts will increase each year requiring Committee authorisation.**
- **Make separate payments of the CPI increase where applicable following its confirmation April/May 2025.**

3.0 Main report

Key Issues

- 3.1 Members will recall Council has long standing arrangements in place to provide financial support to 7 Council community centres that are managed independently by the community sector.**
- 3.2 As part of the rate setting process for 2020/21, Committee agreed the allocation to IMCC's would be subject annually to any CPI increase to be applied on issue of Letter of Offer.**

However, as CPI details may not be available until April/May 2025 some CPI payments will be paid separately from the award. A clause will be included in all funding agreements to allow for the processing of the CPI increase payment when the details are available.

- 3.3 The 2024/25 individual allocations to IMCC's are below. CPI increase to be added when available April/May 2025.

<u>Independently Managed Centres</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Shaftesbury Recreation Centre	£71,552.46
Grosvenor Recreation Centre	£71,552.46
Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre	£71,552.46
Denmark Street Community Centre	£24,811.86
Carrick Hill Community Centre	£39,485.03
Sally Gardens	£71,552.46
Hanwood Trust	£71,552.46
Total	£422,059.19

Compliance with reporting requirements

- 3.4 The offer of award listed for Ballymacarrett Recreation Centre will be subject to the Agreement Holder complying with the reporting requirements from the 2024 – 2025 Letter of Offer. Officers continue to offer support to the organisation; however, Council has not received the appropriate reporting returns to enable payment of any of the 2024 – 2025 funding. Officers have written to the Agreement holders reminding them of their responsibilities and the risk to their funding and future implications.

Financial Implications

- 3.5 Annual awards to IMCC's including CPI are contained within approved budgets and factored into future budgeting/forecasting processes.

Equality or Good Relations Implications and Rural Needs Assessment

- 3.6 This will be considered throughout and any appropriate issues highlighted to Members. Any amendments to existing scheme or new scheme will be considered in the context of any equality/Good Relations and rural needs considerations."

The Committee agreed to award the revenue funding to the centres as outlined within the recommendation and also to make separate consumer price increases (CPI), when and where applicable, following confirmation of CPI IN 2025. It was agreed also that a review be undertaken of the Council-used funding model in this regard.

**Expansion of Glass Collections / Introduction of
Smaller Vehicles for Difficult to Access Streets**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to update Members on the roll out of the first phase of the expansion of glass collections which commenced on 27th January 2025.

2.0 Recommendation

- 2.1** Members are requested to note the contents of the report.

3.0 Main Report

Expansion of Kerbside glass collections

- 3.1** Members will be aware of the ongoing work to deliver phase 1 of the expansion of the kerbside glass collection scheme. As previously reported, this phase will cover approximately 23,000 households in the east, south and west of the city, including the circa 3000 LGR transfer households who were switched to a blue bin scheme during the Local Government Reform transfer and therefore their kerbside glass service was discontinued at that time.
- 3.2** The project, which is part funded by DAERA, intends to expand the service to all remaining Council Households in phases 2 and 3 in 2025/26 and 2026/27, subject to further funding being agreed by Council.
- 3.3** The project will improve access to kerbside services and increase the amount of household waste that can be recycled and drive improved circularity of materials, which will be processed locally in Northern Ireland.
- 3.4** The current kerbside glass service will be expanded to include two additional vehicles and two additional crews. They will collect 44 litre boxes from households and shared 240 litre communal glass bins from apartments every two weeks. Each crew and vehicle will service 10 routes across a fortnightly cycle, meaning 20 additional routes in total. A total of 22,597 households will receive glass collections as part of this expansion phase.

Individual Households

- 3.5 The Resource and Fleet Service began the operational rollout of the expanded service on 27th January 2025. For all of the service expansion for individual households there will be a rollout plan with three elements
- Firstly, The Resource Advisor Team will begin hand delivering communications to every address, in route onboarding sequence to residents, outlining how the scheme works when to expect their new container and when to expect their first collection.
 - Next the BCC contractor will deliver 44 litre boxes to households within 3-6 working days after letters are delivered. The boxes delivered will also contain a leaflet giving more information and QR code if needed, which will allow the resident to check their collection day. Corporate Comms will also provide communications support through social media and web updates.
 - Finally, collections will begin. For those residents receiving letters week commencing 27th of January, glass collections will commence on 10th February. It is envisaged that all individual households will be fully onboarded and receiving fortnightly collections by week commencing 7th March.

Apartments

- 3.6 In relation to apartments, those apartments within phase 1 which have already been assessed in advance to have communal bins, will be onboarded separately.
- 3.7 The BCC contractor will deliver bins to these 72 sites week commencing Monday 3rd March with communications rolled out to sites by the Resource Advisor team. The apartments collections will commence between 10th March and 21st March. After this point, the service will be fully onboarded and become “business as usual”.

Financial and Resource Implications

- 3.8 In relation to the expansion of glass collections, DAERA will 50/50 match fund the agreed capital requirements as agreed in their Letter of Offer, subject to the Memorandum of Understanding having been agreed by the Council.

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

3.9 None.”

Regarding the locations to be chosen for years two and three of the scheme, the Committee was advised that a report would be submitted for its consideration in due course.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and welcomed the extension of the schemes as outlined therein.

**Temporary Closure of Park Road
and Palmerstown Recycling Centres**

The Committee considered a report which outlined the arrangements that would be put in place during the temporary closures to facilitate repairs to the concrete bays at the above-mentioned sites. It was noted that it was anticipated that work in respect of the Park Road site would take place between 16th February and 9th March, with work at the Palmerstown site to be conducted between 9th and 31st March inclusive.

The Committee noted the contents of the report and the alternative arrangements that would be put in place for residents to avail of during the closure of the affected sites.

Arising from discussion, officers undertook to ensure that information regarding missed bin collections would continue to be circulated to Members on a daily basis.

Requests to Host Events in Parks

The Committee considered a report which outlined details of a number of applications which had been submitted seeking permission to host events in the Council's parks and open spaces. After discussion, permission was granted for the hosting of the following events within the Council's parks and open spaces in 2025, further details in respect of which were contained within the associated report:

- Belfast Children's Festival Family Day Out - Cathedral Gardens
- CardioSoc Colour Run – Ormeau Park
- Bloomfield Gospel Hall Gospel Outreach - Dixon Playing Fields
- Darkness into Light – Ormeau Park
- 24-Hour Run – Victoria Park
- Belfast Memory Walk – Ormeau Park
- Autism NI Colour Run – Ormeau Park

The Committee granted approval for the events as outlined. 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.

Public Rights of Way - Clarification re: Council's Legal Powers

The Committee was reminded that, at its meeting on 10th September, 2024, it had agreed, in principle, to assert three Public Rights of Way, those being from Upper Malone Road to Old Coach Road; from Old Coach Road to Malone Heights; and from Old Coach Road to Malone Playing Fields. That decision had been subject to legal clarification being sought regarding the Council's ability to maintain the surfaces and keep the aforementioned right of ways clear and accessible.

The Committee considered a report in this regard which confirmed that the Council was statutorily required to assert the aforementioned rights of way as set out. In addition, under Article 3 of the Access to the Countryside (Northern Ireland) Order 1983, councils were statutorily bound to ensure that a public right of way was clear and accessible. However, councils were not statutorily bound to maintain such public rights of way, other than being obliged to ensure that they were clear and accessible, and, for such purposes, consultation must be undertaken with the relevant landowner and adjoining properties.

Noted.

Applications for the Naming of New Streets

The Committee agreed to grant applications to name new streets as Ben Madigan Mews and Ben Madigan Way.

Applications for Dual Language Street Signs

The Committee agreed to the erection of second street nameplates, in Irish, at Lismoyne Park, Slievecoole Park, Mooreland Park, Riverdale Gardens, Riverdale Park South, Riverdale Park Avenue, Orchardville Crescent, Brooke Park, Ladybrook Parade, Broom Drive, Cliftonville Road and Old Throne Park.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of an application regarding Malone Valley Park, to enable it to be reconsidered once the applications already received had been processed. It was noted that a report, as previously requested, outlining best practice in considering such deferred applications would be submitted to the Committee for its consideration in March.

Transfer of Landlord Registration Scheme to Local Councils

The Committee noted the contents of a report which provided an update on the arrangements to be put in place to oversee the transfer of the landlord registration scheme from the Department for Communities to local councils, a function which would be overseen by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

Issues Raised in Advance

Dilapidated/Dangerous Buildings in Belfast

The Committee noted the contents of a report, which had been requested by the Chairperson, in relation to the above-mentioned matter, together with an overview of an initial assessment which had been undertaken by Council officers regarding the damage caused to properties in the city as a result of Storm Éowyn on 24th January.

It was noted that a further report in this regard would be submitted for consideration in due course.

Request to Erect a Memorial Tree - Ruby Murray Village Green

With the permission of the Chairperson, Councillor Kelly addressed the Committee, and referred to the recent passing of Mr. Trevor Greer, a long-standing community worker within the Greater Village area. She explained that representatives from within the local community had approached her to request that authority be granted to erect a memorial tree within the Ruby Murray Village Green as a tribute to the work undertaken by Mr. Greer.

It was proposed by Councillor Bunting, seconded by Councillor McLaughlin, and agreed that that officers would submit a report to the Committee's meeting in March in respect of the request.

Family Parking at GLL Leisure Centres

At the request of Councillor Maghie, officers undertook provide a report in this regard for consideration at a future meeting.

Animal Welfare Services

(Prior to considering this item, the Committee resolved, given that the information related to an individual, that this matter be treated as exempt information, as specified within Section 42 (4) and Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.)

The Committee noted information which had been provided by Councillor Verner and the Director of City Services' comments thereon.

Presentations

The Committee noted that both the Irish Football Foundation and Greenwich Leisure Limited would be in attendance to make presentations at the meeting scheduled for Tuesday 4th March.