

Council

MONTHLY MEETING OF BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

Held in the City Hall on Tuesday, 2nd May, 2017
at 6.00 o'clock p.m., pursuant to notice.

Members present: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor (Alderman Kingston) (Chairperson); the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Campbell); the High Sheriff (Alderman Haire); Aldermen Browne, McCoubrey, McKee, L. Patterson, R. Patterson, Rodgers, Sandford and Spence; and Councillors Armitage, Attwood, Austin, Beattie, Bell, Clarke, Collins, Copeland, Corr, Corr Johnston, Craig, Dorrian, Dudgeon, Garrett, Graham, Groves, Hargey, Heading, Hussey, Hutchinson, Johnston, Jones, Kyle, Long, Lyons, Magee, Magennis, McAllister, McAteer, McCabe, McConville, McCusker, McDonough-Brown, McVeigh, Milne, Newton, Nicholl, O'Donnell, O'Hara, O'Neill, Reynolds and Walsh.

Reading of Scriptures

Prior to the meeting commencing, the Lord Mayor read a passage from the Scriptures.

Summons

The Chief Executive submitted the summons convening the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were reported on behalf of Aldermen Convery and McGimpsey and Councillors Boyle, Bunting, Carson, Howard and Mullan.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Minutes of the Council

Moved by the Lord Mayor (Alderman Kingston),
Seconded by the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Campbell) and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the monthly meeting of the Council of 3rd April be taken as read and signed as correct.

Official Announcements

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, extended his condolences to Alderman R. Patterson on the recent death of her mother, Frances.

The Lord Mayor, on behalf of the Council, congratulated Councillor Nicholl on her engagement and congratulated also Councillor Lyons and the former Councillor Claire Hanna on the birth of their daughter, Niamh.

The Lord Mayor reported that Councillor Carson had recently undergone a surgical procedure and extended to him his best wishes for a speedy recovery.

At the request of Councillor Armitage, the Council condemned a recent attack on a migrant family in East Belfast.

Change of Membership on Outside Body

The Chief Executive reported that notification had been received from the Sinn Fein Party indicating that it wished to replace Councillor O'Hara with Councillor McAteer on the Lagan Valley Regional Park Advisory Committee.

The Council approved the change.

Filming of Proceedings

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

The Council agreed to accede to the request.

Request to Address the Council

The Chief Executive reported that a request had been received from Mr. D. O'Neill, the Principal of Good Shepherd Primary School, to allow a deputation to address the Council on the potential impact of the proposed cuts to the Education budget.

The Council agreed to accede to the request and, accordingly, Mr. O'Neill, together with Mr. S. McNamee and Mr. J. Wallace, the principals of St. Paul's Primary School and Stranmillis Primary School, respectively, were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr. McNamee thanked the Council for the opportunity to highlight the difficulties which would be faced by primary schools across Belfast, should the proposed cuts to the Education budget be implemented. He explained that teachers worked tirelessly to ensure that every child was provided with the opportunity to acquire a quality education and that, as the role of a teacher continued to evolve, schools were finding that their resources were continually being stretched and the services which they were able to provide were being restricted. That would, he pointed out, lead to increases in class sizes, which would limit the time which teachers would have available to work with small groups and with individual children, would reduce special educational needs provision and could, potentially, lead to the introduction of fees for those services which were offered currently either free of charge or at a highly subsidised rate. He concluded by stressing that continued cuts to the Education budget would have the inevitable effect of increasing rates of underachievement and creating a skills shortage and have a detrimental effect on society.

Mr. Wallace informed the Council that the deputation represented a group of at least forty-three principals from controlled, maintained, integrated and Irish medium primary schools from across Belfast and the wider area. He reported that, for the past six years, schools had been faced with cuts in their educational funding and that they had co-operated fully with the Department of Education by making the necessary reductions to staffing levels and resources. Despite that, they had been faced with an annual reduction in funding, to the extent that, this year, they would be unable to implement the cuts being imposed upon them and offer a quality education to all of their pupils.

He reported further that, in March, the Department of Education had written to schools providing an update on the financial planning assumptions for the forthcoming financial year which, despite a definitive budget not having been agreed, had indicated clearly that primary schools would again be significantly affected. In April, the Secretary of State had announced a further reduction of 2.5% for primary school funding. Mr. Wallace made the point that the reductions being proposed currently by the Department of Education and by the Secretary of State would place a further burden upon primary schools, many of which had experienced financial difficulties in the previous year. He outlined the current budgetary position of Stranmillis Primary School and the difficulties which it too would face, should the proposed cuts be implemented, and pointed out that the aforementioned group of principals had agreed that they would continue to place the needs of pupils at the forefront of their decision-making and to exercise budgetary discretion and firm financial management within their schools. However, they would not be facilitating any further cuts to their school budgets, as those would have a lasting impact upon their pupils' education and wellbeing and they would, reluctantly, be planning for deficit budgetary positions within the next three-year plans.

Accordingly, he urged the Council to issue a statement endorsing the principals' campaign for adequate funding to be made available to primary schools and for individual Members to inform other Elected Representatives within their Political Parties of the campaign, with a view to eliciting their support.

The Lord Mayor thanked the deputation for their contribution and they retired from the meeting.

After discussion, the Council agreed that the Lord Mayor should forward to the Secretary of State a letter expressing the Council's support for the primary school sector and its opposition to the proposed cuts to the Education budget. The Council agreed also that Members should draw the issue to the attention of their respective MLAs and MPs in order to obtain their support for the principals' campaign.

Strategic Policy and Resources Committee

Moved by Councillor Hussey,
Seconded by Alderman McKee,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the Strategic and Policy and Resources Committee of 21st April be approved and adopted.

Amendment

Draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity

Moved by Councillor Reynolds,
Seconded by Councillor Craig,

That the decision of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st April under the heading "Draft Policy on Linguistic Diversity" be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

On a vote by show of hands, twenty-two Members voted for the amendment and thirty-one against and it was declared lost.

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee of 21st April were thereupon approved and adopted.

People and Communities Committee

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Magennis,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the People and Communities Committee of 4th and 5th April be approved and adopted.

**Request for Matter to be Referred Back
For Further Consideration**

Partnerships in Parks and Open Spaces

Alderman Rodgers requested that the Chairperson agree to the minute under the heading "Partnerships in Parks and Open Spaces", in so far as it related to the award of an additional grant of £10,000 to Feile an Phobail, being referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

The Chairperson declined the request.

Amendment

Partnerships in Parks and Open Spaces

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Alderman Browne,

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 4th April under the heading "Partnerships in Parks and Open Spaces", in so far as it relates to the award of an additional grant of £10,000 to Feile an Phobail, be referred back to the Committee for further consideration.

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

Amendment

Chartered Institution of Wastes Management – National Conference

Moved by Councillor Dudgeon,
Seconded by Alderman Browne,

That the decision of the People and Communities Committee of 4th April under the heading “Chartered Institution of Wastes Management – National Conference” be amended to provide that the phrase “two relevant officers” be replaced by “the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson of the Committee (or their nominees)”.

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

Adoption of Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the People and Communities Committee of 4th and 5th April were thereupon approved and adopted.

Resolution: Belfast City Council Traffic Regulation Orders (Northern Ireland) 2017

Moved by Councillor Garrett,
Seconded by Councillor Magennis and

Resolved - That the Council agrees to pass a Resolution to make a Belfast City Council Traffic Regulation Order (Northern Ireland) 2017 for each of North, South, East and West Belfast, prohibiting the use by vehicles and pedestrians of those streets in North, South, East and West Belfast, as set out within the minutes of the meeting of the People and Communities Committee of 4th April, and to be effective from 2nd May, 2017.

City Growth and Regeneration Committee

Moved by Councillor Graham,
Seconded by Alderman L. Patterson,

That the minutes of the proceedings of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 12th April, omitting the decision under the heading “Gasworks Northern Fringe Masterplan”, which, in accordance with Standing Order 47 and Section 41(1)(b) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, has been called-in, be approved and adopted.

Notice of Motion – Energy Transition

At the request of Councillor Milne, the Council agreed that a report be submitted to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee providing an update on the work which had been undertaken to date around the development and delivery of a City Energy Strategy, arising from a motion which had been proposed by the former Councillor R. Brown and passed by the Council at its meeting on 2nd November, 2015.

Adoption of Minutes

Subject to the foregoing addition, the minutes of the meeting of the City Growth and Regeneration Committee of 12th April were approved and adopted.

Licensing Committee

Moved by Councillor Armitage,
Seconded by Councillor Hutchinson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Licensing Committee of 19th April, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Planning Committee

Moved by Councillor Johnston,
Seconded by Councillor Hutchinson and

Resolved - That the minutes of the proceedings of the Planning Committee of 11th April, omitting matters in respect of which the Council has delegated its powers to the Committee, be approved and adopted.

Notices of Motion

Mental Health and Addiction Support Services

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor O'Hara proposed:

“In recognition of the devastation that many families face when losing loved ones due to drug and alcohol misuse, or the impact of suicide within our communities, we recognise the need for a City wide response to support our communities in dealing with these issues.

As the Council has committed, through the Belfast Agenda, to 'design and deliver an integrated city programme to address health inequalities, including enhancing mental wellbeing and reducing social isolation', we agree to establish a forum with our strategic and community partners to address the critical issues of mental health and drug and alcohol addiction support services.

Through this discussion, we aim to identify current levels of provision across drug, alcohol, and mental health services through a mapping exercise, begin a strategic discussion about a dual diagnosis model and to develop a cohesive and co-ordinated strategy on positive mental health for our citizens.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor McCabe.

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

Affordable Warmth Scheme

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Attwood proposed:

“This Council notes that the Affordable Warmth Scheme, administered by the Council, worth almost £1.2m a year, which offers low-income households grants, has been slashed in half due to the failure to agree a budget.

The Council agrees that this fund is vital to improve energy efficiency through measures such as loft insulation and replacement boilers.

Accordingly, the Council agrees to write to Department for Communities to express its deep concern about these cuts and calls upon that Department to fully restore the fund.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Heading.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the People and Communities Committee.

Use of Bus Lanes by Taxis

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Beattie proposed:

“This Council supports the decision by the Department for Infrastructure to introduce the twelve week trial period permitting all taxis to use the Belfast Rapid Transit bus lanes and agrees to write to the Department for Infrastructure a letter of support to extend the duration of the trial period for an additional six months and expand the trial to include all Belfast bus lanes.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Reynolds.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the City Growth and Regeneration Committee.

**Stained Glass Window –
321 Explosives Ordnance Disposal Company**

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Graham proposed:

"This Council acknowledges the vital role which 321 Explosives Ordnance Disposal Company, Royal Army Ordnance Corps, has provided to our City and its citizens over a number of decades. Their sacrifice and dedication has saved many lives and helped preserve our city from those who would physically destroy it. The Council agrees to commission a stained glass window to acknowledge their dedication and service and install this in an appropriate location in the City Hall."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Johnston.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Housing Provision in Belfast

In accordance with notice on the agenda, Councillor Collins proposed:

"This Council recognises the severe shortage in social housing across the City, and the detrimental effect which this is having on many citizens in Belfast. It also notes the important work that Belfast housing rights organisations and campaigners have done to highlight this problem in some of the most socially deprived areas of Belfast, by working with the homeless and people in poor housing to identify solutions to the housing crisis. One such solution is to maximise the use of available land right across the City for new build social housing.

In particular, the Council notes the concentration of housing stress in North Belfast and the ongoing campaign by residents and housing rights activists to ensure that a number of sites in North Belfast reach their full social housing potential. The Council calls for a reconsideration of the zoning of redevelopment sites to reflect the necessity to build social housing in North Belfast, in order to deliver a real reprieve to the acute housing crisis in this part of the City."

The motion was seconded by Councillor McCabe.

In accordance with Standing Order 13(f), the motion was referred, without discussion, to the Planning Committee.

Lord Mayor
Chairperson