

People and Communities Committee

Tuesday, 9th October, 2018

MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor Nicholl (Chairperson);
Aldermen Copeland, McCoubrey, Rodgers and Sandford; and
Councillors Baker, Canavan, Corr, Heading, Lyons,
Magee, Magennis, McAllister, McReynolds, Newton,
Pankhurst and O'Donnell.

In attendance: Mr. N. Grimshaw, Strategic Director City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. R. Crozier, Director of Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City Services; and
Mrs. S. Steele, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies were recorded on behalf of Councillors Corr Johnston and McCusker.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 4th September were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by the Council at its meeting on 1st October.

Declarations of Interest

Councillor Magennis declared an interest in agenda item 4 (a) – Assets Report (Sally Gardens and Beechlawn Farm), in that he was associated with the Sally Gardens Management Committee.

Request to Present - Front Row Union Women's Rugby

The Committee agreed that representatives from the Front Row Women's Rugby would be invited to present to a future special meeting of the Committee, with a date to be agreed with the Chairperson.

Matters referred back from Council/Motions

Greening of Derelict Spaces

The Committee was reminded that, at the meeting of Council on 1st October, the following motion, which had been proposed by Councillor Kyle and seconded by Councillor Attwood, had been referred to the Committee for consideration:

“Creating green spaces in cities produces significant benefits, not least in the area of mental health. Recent research has shown a 40%

reduction in feelings of depression and a 50% reduction in feelings of worthlessness among residents, as a result of greening derelict plots of land. The benefits were even greater in areas of deprivation.

Simple interventions, such as clearing rubbish, sowing grass, planting trees and marking the boundary with a low fence, can produce health benefits, remove eyesores and reduce antisocial behaviour.

This Council will carry out an audit to identify derelict sites in public ownership. It will establish a budget in the coming year and engage with other statutory bodies in order to create a programme of work whereby derelict plots of land are cleared, grassed and fenced, thus enhancing neighbourhoods and improving wellbeing.”

The Committee agreed that a report be submitted to a future meeting which would take into consideration the legal duties of private owners and other statutory agencies in respect of derelict land.

Committee/Strategic Issues

Minutes of Strategic Cemeteries & Crematorium Development Working Group

The Committee was advised that at the meetings of the Strategic Cemetery and Crematorium Working Group held on 5th September and 3rd October, the following key items had been considered:

- update in respect of memorial safety;
- a request, which had been declined at this time, seeking the Council to provide a headstone on the unmarked grave of Titanic survivor Mary Sloan;
- information regarding the authorisation required to erect memorial plaques;
- update in respect of the permanent memorial to mark Z1 in the City Cemetery;
- information regarding making Clifton Street Graveyard safe for public access;
- update on the implementation of Plotbox as the Bereavement Services Business System which would be operational by November;
- update report on the stream diversion in Roselawn Cemetery in order to try and avoid flooding;
- the waiver to Children’s Bereavement Charges which would be applied from 2nd October;
- update on plans to protect and enhance the existing heritage in the City Cemetery – it was noted that the Working Group would be going on a site visit in order to obtain a more detailed overview of the site;
- Storm Ali – 28 memorial trees had been destroyed and 12 had been damaged. These would be replaced as soon as was practicably possible;

- Headstone Foundations – an update report regarding this matter would be submitted to a future meeting of the Working Group; and
- Update in respect of the proposed burial site at Dundrod.

The Committee approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Working Group held on 5th September and 3rd October.

Restricted Item

The information contained in the report 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 of this item as, due to the nature of the item, there would be a disclosure of exempt information as described in Section 42(4) and Section 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Belsonic - Five Year Booking

The Committee agreed that the matter be deferred to enable a more detailed report to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee, which would give consideration as to whether social clauses could be stipulated within the terms and conditions in order to add social value.

Review of Community Provision

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The paper presents the context and need for a review of our ‘Community’ service offer in support of integrated Neighbourhood Services and the priorities set out in the Belfast Agenda.

1.2 The definition of ‘community provision’ for a future integrated service delivery includes the traditional services namely:

- **Community development and services;**
- **Community safety/ anti-social behaviour;**
- **Neighbourhood/ community cohesion/ Good Relations;**
- **Outreach/ education and awareness/ open spaces;**
- **Active living and leisure development &**
- **Health and Wellbeing.**

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to;

- note the planned review of community provision across the new CNS department and
 - i. Agree the proposed governing strategic principles
 - ii. Agree the commissioning of external support as required.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Since local government reform, Council has formed the Belfast Agenda, the city's community plan, and Belfast has become a SMART & Resilient city. The City Centre Regeneration Strategy and Local Development Plan seek to enhance city infrastructure & place and continuing efforts to attract external investment and tourism along with the City Deal provides opportunity for everyone to prosper.

3.2 Members are shaping the Inclusive Growth framework to ensure 'no one is left behind' and this is likely to enable programmes & interventions to prevent poverty, or provide support where it may result. There is now a need to review our front line community provision to ensure it is enabled to play its significant part in achieving these goals.

3.3 Chief officers are forming the area framework to enable an integrated area service delivery with neighbourhood regeneration, targeted interventions and a suite of city services delivered through a robust and sustainable area planning model. This will help realise Council's original aspiration in March 2015 '*to review and modernise services to ensure they are performing at their best and that resources, processes and technology are integrated to maximise efficiency, improve performance and increase customer satisfaction*'.

3.4 This decision led to the formation of the City & Neighbourhood Services Department & since appointment in January 2016, the Strategic Director of City and Neighbourhood Services has led this change programme bringing all 1700 staff together across a range of services from parks & open spaces, environmental health, waste, community safety, community services and good relations, etc. into one service hub with all services settled in the CWB.

- 3.5 The pillars on which the C&NS change programme is founded are improved customer focus, support for effective neighbourhood working, fit for purpose structure and increased efficiencies. These are supported by a number of work streams with a range of transition activities emerging, for example, the onset of the new customer focus management approach and the 10 year waste strategy consultation.
- 3.6 It is now timely, as the change process continues to evolve, to seek external assistance to independently scope current community provision in order to support the design of future activity in line with the emerging 'neighbourhood/ area working' framework. The review will also consider how to improve service integration under the direction of the incoming Neighbourhood Services and City Services Managers.
- 3.7 A central aim of the Belfast Agenda is to enhance the quality of life for people in Belfast by working collaboratively to improve our services to communities. It is long accepted that community development plays an important role in promoting active involvement of local communities in addressing local problems of disadvantage, poverty and inequality. Without it the work of any organisation seeking to deliver change in local areas becomes much more difficult.
- 3.8 It is proposed the review is underpinned by a set of strategic principles and that these include the need to embed good community development practice so that our future neighbourhood support strengthens communities, fosters improved good relations and increases active and empowered citizenship. A robust stakeholder plan will ensure effective channels for elected members to inform the review from the outset. It will also engage council staff, Trade Unions and other community representatives.
- 3.9 A critical point has been reached where community provision needs transformed to sustainably meet the needs, standards & expectations of Members, staff & citizens.
- 3.10 The definition of 'community provision' for a future integrated service delivery includes the traditional services namely:
- Community development and services;
 - Community safety/ anti-social behaviour;
 - Neighbourhood/ community cohesion/ Good Relations;
 - Outreach/ education and awareness/ open spaces;
 - Active living and leisure development &
 - Health and Wellbeing.

- 3.11 The definition will bear in mind other services which may have a benefit in being delivered as part of this community offer however do not directly sit within City & Neighbourhood Services Department, for example, employability.
- 3.12 The review will capture the principled way of doing that has been adopted within services to date and will seek to confirm the strategic principles for future service delivery:
- Outcome focused
 - Community development approach
 - Community resilience
 - Stakeholder participation and engagement
 - Working with communities
 - Innovative, people centred design and delivery
 - Customer focused
 - Sustainability and increased efficiency
 - Effective neighbourhood working
- 3.13 As noted, this piece of work will have a robust underpinning stakeholder engagement plan to ensure it leads to a market leading service portfolio which returns social value and invest to save opportunities.
- 3.14 To complete phase I of the review, members are asked to agree the need for external expert opinion to complement departmental business development resources. This will provide resource support to meet the challenging time-frame and allow for independent comment.
- 3.15 The main tasks in the review will include:
- Develop a project plan and phased timeframe (up to 16 weeks)
 - Present a stakeholder engagement plan to include elected members, officers, Trade Union representatives and appropriate stakeholders
 - Scope the current range of community facing service information including the range and uptake of programmes, current resource investment, response to differential need and demand, performance management and community impact, etc.
 - Complete a best practice review, including appropriate benchmarking, to recommend the future 'community' offer which will best support council and Belfast Agenda priorities and outcomes
 - Consider delivery models in support of area working
 - Develop a range of recommendations in relation to change priorities and a related transition plan

3.16 Next steps

As the review progresses, further committee reports will be tabled to consider the 3 key outputs: review of current services, recommendations report on the proposed future BCC community offer and a related change plan.

3.17 The review will form the first phase of the project. Pending committee consideration of related reports, the agreed change plan will be initiated.

3.18 Financial & Resource Implications

The review will be covered within existing budgets.

3.19 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

There are no implications associated with this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Physical Programme & Asset Management

Assets Report (Sally Gardens & Beechlawn Farm)

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members to asset related disposal, acquisition and estates matters.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Acquisition of roadway at Sally Gardens

The Committee is asked to;

- approve the proposed acquisition of the roadway known as Sally Gardens Lane from the Department for Communities subject to the approval of the Strategic Policy & Resources Committee.

Proposed Appropriation of Beechvale Farm

Committee is recommended;

- to approve the appropriation of Beechvale Farm from City and Neighbourhood Services to Property and Projects for holding in the Corporate Landbank, pending future decisions on the asset. The decision is subject to agreement by Strategic Policy and Resources Committee as relevant committee for the receiving department.

3.0 Main report

3.1

(i) Acquisition of roadway at Sally Gardens

Key Issues

As part of LGR and following an exchange of land with Poleglass Community Association @ Sally Gardens (PCA) the Council acquired the lands. The Council leased back the Community Centre and constructed changing facilities and a 3G pitch on the land to the rear of the site.

As part of the transfer of lands, the Council were granted a right of way over Sally Gardens Lane but the ownership of the road remained with DfC.

DfC have now approached the Council seeking to transfer the ownership of the road to the Council on the basis that Council now own all the facilities at Sally Gardens and the only access to these facilities is over Sally Gardens Lane. Officers have agreed to this request subject to this Committee's approval and a report to SP&R in accordance with standing orders.

3.2 Financial & Resource Implications

The roadway will transfer at nil cost. The roadway is currently in good condition. C&NS will be responsible for all repair and maintenance following the acquisition of the roadway.

3.3 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None

3.4

(ii) Proposed Appropriation of Beechvale Farm

Key Issues

Beechvale Farm comprises a 136.9 acre farm approximately seven miles to the south east of Belfast and is in Lisburn and

Castlereagh Council area. It comprises a former farmhouse, bungalow, ancillary buildings, an office and commercial glasshouses. The land is mostly fields with some wooded areas, a fen wetland, a watercourse and connecting laneways. The farm was acquired for the cultivation of trees and shrubs for city parks. This is no longer undertaken as significant cost savings were achieved by Competitive Compulsory Tendering. Much of the land is let on seasonal lets and the buildings have become redundant apart from some storage use.

City and Neighbourhood Services holds property for operational purposes. As Beechvale Farm is no longer used for operational purposes, it would more suitably be held in the Corporate Landbank. The Corporate Landbank comprises properties which have no current operational use but which are either being safeguarded for future use or are being held pending disposal. The Corporate Landbank is managed and inspected by Estates Unit, who also appraise the assets for future options.

3.5 Financial & Resource Implications

There are no financial implications. Resource for managing the property would transfer from City and Neighbourhood Services officers to Property & Projects, Estates Unit.

3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment

None.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Tropical Ravine - Operational Plan

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised that, as the Committee was aware, the Tropical Ravine had recently undergone a 3.8m refurbishment programme which had been funded by Belfast City Council (BCC), the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Friends of Botanic Gardens. The Ravine had re-opened to the public in mid-April 2018 and the number of visitors had surpassed expectations, with approximately 142,000 visits to date.

The Committee had previously agreed the operational arrangements around the opening/closing, staffing and programming of the facility but, as a result of the overwhelming response to the facility, management felt it was necessary to review the existing arrangements. The Director explained that the use of the facility to include the hire of the venue for events and hospitality needed to be developed and the appropriate resources and skills recruited in order to ensure that the facility would generate revenue and repeat visits.

The Director advised that the HLF had finalised its contributions to the scheme and confirmed the final funding available, on the basis of an agreed operational plan to the end of March 2021. The funding would primarily be focused on ensuring the sustainability of the operations and improving the use of the venue. The Committee noted that the current operational staff included part-time Bot Crew and an Activities Officer whose role was to develop a programme of events/activities to support the community engagement and educational awareness of the Ravine. The temporary Activities Officer position was no longer required as the focus would now be on the day-to-day operations and development of the Tropical Ravine. A new job role would be required with a more commercial focus to drive events, programmes and tourism linkages and to build upon the existing work with the community and education sectors.

The Director advised that the staffing required to operate the facility would be provided from existing budgets and the balance of the grant funding, however, this would need to be mainstreamed, potentially through income generation, to ensure the sustainability of the facility going forward (after March 2021).

The Committee noted that the Department would consult with the Trade Unions representatives regarding the proposed staffing changes and seek its input.

The Committee agreed to the creation of the relevant post in line with the existing funding, with the understanding that this would require Belfast City Council funding after the end of the grant period, which would be supported by income generation opportunities.

Operational Issues

Dual Language Nameplates

The Committee approved the applications to erect second nameplates in Irish at North Green and Cavendish Street.

Street Naming

The Committee approved the naming in respect of Castlegowan Park, off Quarry Hill, BT5 and Castlegowan Place, off Quarry Hill, BT5 and Ishbel Mews, off Lady Ishbel Avenue, BT8.

Japanese Knotweed

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 Members will be aware that at the People and Communities Committee meeting of 6th February 2018, Councillor McReynolds proposed a motion that the Council must do more to assist individuals whose homes are negatively impacted upon by Japanese knotweed and should write to**

the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) to see if they would be content to co-fund a Belfast City Council *'not for profit'* service to treat properties across Belfast. An action arising from the Committee meeting was therefore for officers to consider the feasibility of this request.

1.2 An interim update report was provided to Members at the Committee meeting of 12th April 2018, advising that officers had written to their counterparts within NIEA concerning the manner of delivery of a potential Japanese knotweed treatment scheme for Belfast and regarding the potential for part-funding by NIEA for such a scheme. In addition, the report highlighted a range of complex treatment and other technical issues that would have to be overcome by the council before any Japanese knotweed treatment scheme could be commenced. The report also highlighted that the view of the City Solicitor had been sought on whether a council *'not for profit'* treatment scheme might face a legal challenge from existing commercial Japanese knotweed treatment providers.

1.3 Responses have been received from NIEA and the City Solicitor.

1.4 This report serves to provide a further update to the Committee and to seek a recommendation concerning the introduction of a Belfast City Council led *'not for profit'* treatment service, taking account of the responses received from NIEA and the City Solicitor and the anticipated resource requirements and risks associated with the introduction and operation of such a scheme.

2.0 Recommendations.

2.1 Committee is asked to

- Note the content of this update report.
- Consider the recommendation in paragraph 3.7 that the Council should not introduce a *'not for profit'* Japanese knotweed treatment scheme to treat properties across Belfast at this time.

3.0 Main report.

3.1 In respect of a Council offered Japanese knotweed treatment scheme, the City Solicitor has advised that Article 79 *'Council's general power of competence'* of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, empowers a council to do anything, with or without a charge, that individuals generally may do for the benefit of the council, its district or persons resident or present in its district. However, the City Solicitor has caveated this advice by instructing that it would

be important to have a form of indemnity signed off by those who are to receive a treatment service from the council in order to safeguard the council.

- 3.2 The previous Committee report of 12th April 2018 highlighted a range of technical Japanese knotweed treatment issues that, in view of the City Solicitor's advice, would have to be specifically indemnified, including, for example, the treatment approach (chemical treatment, deep burial or excavation and off site disposal), the treatment methodology, the likely treatment duration (up to 5 years), the use of external contractors and the potential implications of treatment on the sale or depreciation of properties or assets. It is additionally considered that it would be highly problematic to forecast the likely demand for a Japanese knotweed treatment scheme as there is limited information available on the incidence of invasive species across Belfast.

3.3 NIEA Response

In its response to the Council, NIEA has highlighted that the treatment and control of Japanese knotweed, and indeed other invasive plants listed in Part II of Schedule 9 of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, is challenging as there are no statutory mechanisms to compel owners or occupiers of land to control invasive species or to permit others to carry out control without the owner or occupier's consent. Accordingly, NIEA has advised that in accordance with national and European legislative provisions, the Department's policy context is one of protecting the ecology of an area as opposed to safeguarding property or other commercial assets.

- 3.4 As a consequence of legislative and other competing imperatives, NIEA, who is the regulator, has advised that it is not therefore in a position to provide enhanced support beyond that which the Agency currently provides, i.e. supporting members of the public when they seek advice from NIEA on treatment methodologies and supporting training events for council staff delivered by the council's Biodiversity Officer. Members will be aware that NIEA staff have already joined with council officers to provide guidance on awareness and treatment of Japanese knotweed to the general public via the June 2017 edition of City Matters. Members are advised that officers will seek further opportunities to engage with NIEA on Japanese knotweed awareness initiatives during the 2019 growing season.

3.5 In respect of funding private landowners to maintain their properties, NIEA has stated that this would be outside of the remit of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).

3.6 Accordingly, and in view of NIEA's response, it is considered that if the Council were to introduce a '*not for profit*' treatment scheme for Japanese knotweed for Belfast, it would have to wholly devise, establish, fund, manage and operate such a scheme, whether delivered through internal resources or via an external contractor, mindful of all of the legal, financial, contractual, resource, reputational and other liabilities connected with delivering such a scheme. Members are reminded however, that the Council has no statutory remit in respect of the control of Japanese knotweed, other than on its own lands, that there are no internal staff resources available to deliver such a treatment scheme and that there are a number of established and accredited commercial Japanese knotweed treatment contractors already operating across Northern Ireland. Additionally, Members will be aware that the general public can take proactive control steps themselves through the prompt application of an appropriate herbicide to either prevent Japanese knotweed becoming established on their property or to control its ingress from an adjoining property or lands.

3.7 As a consequence of these numerous issues, and mindful of the various legal, financial, contractual, resource and reputational liabilities and risks associated with offering a council led treatment scheme for Japanese knotweed, the Committee is asked to consider a recommendation that the council should not introduce a '*not for profit*' Japanese knotweed treatment scheme to treat properties across Belfast.

3.8 Financial & Resource Implications

The previous Committee report of 12th April 2018 highlighted that the provision of a '*not for profit*' treatment service has not been included within existing revenue estimates for the 2018/2019 financial period and that any treatment option could have significant financial impact on revenue estimates for the Council. Members are advised that provisions for the scheme have similarly not been included within 2019/2020 financial estimates.

3.9 The report also highlighted the potential for significant administrative and financial resource implications should the council wish to establish a commercial contractor led '*not for profit*' Japanese knotweed treatment scheme or if the council

wished to provide an equivalent scheme from 'in house' resources.

- 3.10 NIEA has confirmed that funding private landowners to maintain their properties is outside of the remit of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA).
- 3.11 Equality & Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
- 3.11 The previous Committee report of 12th April 2018 advised that there would be no equality or good relations issues associated with establishing a Japanese knotweed treatment scheme for Belfast.”

During discussion several Members expressed concern at the impact that Japanese Knotweed was having on constituents throughout the City, with many people unable to sell their properties or obtain a mortgage.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the Committee would seek a meeting with the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for an all-party deputation to discuss the issues around Japanese Knotweed control.

FSA Consultation - Proposed Approach to Retained EU Law for Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

- 1.1 Following the United Kingdom Referendum, the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 was passed making provision for all existing EU legislation to be converted on exit into UK law. This was an essential step to ensure food safety and other legal standards are maintained on exit. In order to ensure the converted EU law continues to operate effectively as part of domestic law, the Act provided for corrections to be made by way of statutory instruments. The Food Standards Agency is consulting on the corrections which ministers propose to make to retained EU law relating to food and animal feed safety and hygiene. The consultation also invites general comments on food and feed safety and hygiene in the UK after EU exit and provides an opportunity for the Council to clarify its preferred position in that regard.
- 1.2 Members are asked to agree the response to this consultation and in particular their preferred position for food safety and hygiene in Northern Ireland after EU exit.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is invited to;

- consider and agree the consultation response.

3.0 Main report

3.1 The European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 provided for all existing EU legislation to be converted on exit into UK law, so maintaining the current high standards of food safety and ensuring on day one the regulatory alignment likely to be required to negate the need for food safety checks as foods move between the UK and the EU. The later shall be important as the government seeks to agree with the EU a good deal for both sides. However the consultation package confirms the government continues to prepare for all scenarios including the unlikely prospect of leaving the EU with no deal.

3.2 The Food Standards Agency (FSA) has been working with officials in Northern Ireland as well as Ministers in Westminster, Scotland and Wales is now consulting on the corrections which ministers propose to make to retained EU food law to ensure it continues to operate effectively as part of domestic law.

**3.3 The consultation package is available at:
<https://www.food.gov.uk/news-alerts/consultations/proposed-approach-to-retained-eu-law-for-food-and-feed-safety-and-hygiene>**

3.4 These corrections specifically relate to certain EU bodies and institutions which provide functions under EU law. Once the UK leaves the EU these bodies will no longer be able to perform these functions. It is proposed that these functions including risk management, risk assessment, setting of safety levels and provision of approvals shall, by way of statutory instrument, transfer from the European Commission and the European Food Safety Authority to the appropriate UK authorities, including the Food Standards Agency.

3.5 The UK institutions will not provide these functions in isolation and, subject to negotiations with the EU, the UK government intends to redefine and formalise a close working relationship with the European Food Safety Authority based in exchange of information and expertise, contribution to scientific networks and cross-European collaboration.

- 3.6 The draft Council response, without prejudice to potential future arrangements between the UK and the EU supports the proposals as necessary to ensure retained EU food law is operable within the UK on exit.
- 3.7 It is essential that the FSA and UK Government continue to work with Local Authorities and share information at the earliest opportunity regarding plans for day one scenarios for food law regulation, in particular in relation to export and import controls. Controls both inland and at ports must be considered.
- 3.8 Furthermore, the draft response suggests that Council consider making the following general comments confirming its preferred position on Food safety and hygiene in the UK after EU exit.
1. Any future changes to regulatory controls after the UK leaves the EU should provide the same, or an improved, level of consumer protection.
 2. Any changes to the current legislation should be commensurate with the risk posed by different activities and trades and minimise the regulatory burden on council's and food businesses.
 3. In order to avoid the need for food safety checks on imports from EU countries the UK should continue to recognise EU food safety controls, including controls carried out at EU borders on 3rd country imports. This will be particularly important for Northern Ireland considering its land border with the Republic of Ireland, the significant cross border trade including frequent crossings by small traders. This would best be done as part of a reciprocal agreement with mutual recognition, to reduce the need for both additional import and export controls, to promote regulatory alignment, and facilitate UK-EU trade.
 4. It is anticipated that some additional food safety controls/activities will be required by local authorities and port health authorities as a result of BREXIT and it is important that these should be either on a full cost recovery basis or funded by the UK Government to avoid additional financial burdens on local authorities.
 5. The current checks at UK and EU borders on third country imports should be maintained to facilitate free movement of goods within the EU, and between the EU and the UK, and the UK should seek to maintain access to existing European Union IT and rapid alert arrangements.

3.9 The full draft response to the consultation paper includes answers to all the questions asked.

3.10 Finance and Resource Implications

There are no financial or human resource implications.

3.11 Equality or Good Relations Implications/ Rural Needs Assessment

There are no equality or good relations implications, there is no requirement for rural needs assessment.”

The Committee endorsed the Food Standards Agency Consultation, available on the Council’s website [here](#) on the proposed Approach to Retained EU Law for Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene. It was noted that, in order to meet the deadline of 14th October, it would be submitted in draft form which would be subject to ratification by the Council.

Age Friendly Belfast

The Committee was advised that meetings of the Reference Group on Older People had been held on 12th June and 18th September and the Director of City Services provided a brief overview of the items that had been considered, which included:

- Draft Age Friendly Belfast Plan 2018-2021, which had subsequently been agreed and ratified at the July Council meeting;
- The Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership;
- Age-friendly Belfast Summer Events;
- Positive Ageing Month 2018;
- World Health Organisation (WHO) Healthy Cities Conference 2018;
- Age-Friendly Network; and
- an update in respect of ‘Be Prepared Events’;

The Director advised that an invitation had been received to attend and help deliver a workshop using Belfast as a good practise example at a symposium on demographic change to be held in Hamburg, Germany on 14th and 15th November. This event would be of particular interest to those individuals with responsibility for developing policy around the issues of ageing and demography. Attendance at the symposium was free and the organisers had offered to pay all travel and accommodation costs for three attendees. The Committee was advised that the Reference Group had considered the invitation and agreed that the Chairperson of the Reference Group would attend along with two officers, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee.

The Committee:

- approved and adopted the minutes of the meetings of the Reference Group on Older People held on 12th June and 18th September; and
- approved the recommendation for the Chairperson of the Reference Group and two officers to attend the Korber Symposium, in Hamburg, Germany on 14th and 15th November and noted that the

organisers were paying all travel and accommodation costs for the three attendees and that booking would proceed now on this basis.

Temporary Amendments to Guidelines Relating to the Distribution of Free Printed Material

The Committee considered the undernoted report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 Traders within the city centre have been adversely affected by the recent fire at Bank Buildings in Castle Street. The purpose of this report is to provide information relating to temporary amendments in the guidelines relating to the enforcement of the Free Printed Matter (Belfast) Designation Order 2012. These changes will allow affected businesses to distribute free printed material, such as leaflets, within the city centre under amended guidelines during the period the cordon exists at Bank Buildings.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 The Committee is asked to

- **Agree temporary amendments in the guidelines relating to the enforcement of the Free Printed Matter (Belfast) Designation Order 2012**
- **Note the contents of the report.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 The current guidelines relating to the distribution of free printed material within Belfast were approved by the Health and Environmental Services Committee in September 2014. This followed a one year review resulting from Belfast City Council enacting the Free Printed Matter (Belfast) Designation Order 2012 on 4 March 2013. The 2012 Order designated the land within Belfast City Centre and the Wider University Area on which consent of the council was required to distribute free printed material. The guidelines published in September 2014 included a number of streets in the city centre which the council will not permit the distribution of free printed matter:

- **City Hall Grounds**
- **Donegall Square North**
- **Donegal Square South**
- **Donegall Square East**
- **Donegall Square West**

- Castle Lane
- Corn Market
- Castle Arcade
- William Street South
- Arthur Square
- Arthur Street
- Arthur Place
- Callender Street
- Fountain Street
- Fountain Lane
- Ann Street

- 3.2 The guidelines also included the cost of the Annual Permit which was and remains at £450 per badge. The Council currently has 28 valid annual permits for the city centre. With regard to enforcement of the legislation the guidelines stated:

The permit conditions will be rigorously enforced by the Council. Any contraventions of the permit conditions may result in individual badges being revoked; full permits and any associated badges being revoked and/ or a refusal to grant further permits for a period of one year.

3.3 Proposal

Following representations from traders affected by the recent fire at Primark, Bank Buildings, Castle Street, it is proposed that the current guidelines are suspended for affected traders pending the removal of the cordon around Bank Buildings, Castle Street. To support all businesses, the Council proposes to animate the street scene through street artists and entertainment who may publicise future events.

- 3.4 It is proposed that the Council will consent to the suspension of these guidelines in relation to Council approved events and affected traders and give assurances to businesses that no enforcement action would be taken against them for handing out leaflets dependent upon certain conditions:

- That they must make a written request in advance to distribute free printed material;
- The business has been identified as one of the businesses affected by the cordon;
- The business must notify the Council of the date, location and the duration/timescales of any distribution, that is to take place in advance;
- A maximum of two distributors will be allowed per business;
- That all litter generated as a result of the activity is removed during and after any distribution.

- 3.5 If all these conditions are met, the Council will consent to the suspension of the guidelines and agree not to take any enforcement action. The Council will provide written confirmation to that effect to the trader.
- 3.6 This will mean that affected traders and Council organised events do not have to fill in an application which means that no cost will be charged to the affected traders. The scheme could potentially apply to approximately 50 businesses outside the cordon whom Price Waterhouse Cooper have identified as affected by it. Relevant traders will be identified through the Economic Development Division within the Council.
- 3.7 The Council will therefore not enforce the current September 2014 guidelines in relation to affected traders who have properly notified the council during the period whilst the cordon is in place. Consent for any trader under this scheme may be withdrawn should they fail to comply with the requirements specified by the Council. If the Council does intend to withdraw its consent the business will be notified of that in writing before any enforcement action is taken.
- 3.8 The temporary scheme outlined within this report will cease to apply after the removal of the cordon in place around Bank Buildings, Castle Street.
- 3.9 **Financial & Resource Implications**
- There are no additional financial implications associated with the scheme as enforcement of it is currently delivered within existing budgets.
- 3.10 **Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment**
- There are no implications associated with this report.”

The Committee adopted the recommendations.

Dog Friendly Badging Scheme

The Director of City Services provided the Committee with an update in respect of the opt-in badging scheme which had been developed in collaboration with Tourism NI and Visit Belfast as a result of a Notice of Motion tabled at the meeting of Council held on 3rd July, 2017.

The Committee was advised that the following measures had been implemented to promote the scheme:

- a new section had been developed on the Council's website to promote and provide information on the dog friendly scheme for businesses, residents and visitors to the City <https://belfastcity.gov.uk/dogfriendlybelfast> This webpage provided a link to dog control pages already established on the Council's website regarding responsible dog ownership. The website also provided advice for businesses, including guidance regarding food safety legislation, hygiene advice and an example of best practice from an established Belfast dog friendly restaurant. It also provided links to two websites that maintained up-to-date lists of dog friendly facilities;
- Visit Belfast's website <https://www.visitbelfast.com/eat-drink/discover/pubs-clubs/collections/dog-friendly-pubs> had a list of dog friendly pubs and restaurants and it would continue to add Belfast premises to this list;
- Tourism Northern Ireland (TNI) has two webpages that covered dog friendly pubs and restaurants <https://discovernorthernireland.com/about-northern-ireland/pet-friendly/dog-friendly-pubs-and-restaurants> and <https://www.discovernorthernireland.com/things-to-do/food-and-drink/food-and-drink>

The Committee noted that Belfast City Council had designed and produced 'we are dog friendly' window sticker. Visit Belfast had agreed to stock the sticker in the Visit Belfast Welcome Centre, where it would be available for distribution to dog friendly businesses.

Noted.

List of Approved Suppliers for the Provision of Services at Events in Parks and Open Spaces

The Director of Neighbourhood Services advised the Committee that, as part of the current internal review of the existing Parks and Leisure Events Policy, it had become apparent that, with the increasing number of events being held in parks, there was a need to encourage best practice where third party event organisers were procuring suppliers to deliver services at events. She outlined that, whilst the Council required event organisers to submit an event plan, risk assessment, evidence of public liability insurance and other relevant document for its approval, there was a growing awareness of health and safety risks around certain activities at events, such as inflatables. It was therefore recommended that the Council would compile a list of approved suppliers for the provision of the main types of services at events. These would include the provision of marquees, inflatables, fairground rides, climbing wall, petting farms, face painting, balloon modelling, food and musical performances.

The Committee was asked to note that the Council would not be recommending any specific supplier, the purpose of the list was to provide third party event organisers with a City wide list of potential suppliers that would meet certain standards. The standards would be developed for each service in accordance with the relevant legislation, best practice and guidance. Suppliers would be encouraged to sign up to the approved list of suppliers on an annual basis and to provide evidence of public liability insurance cover and other relevant certification.

The Director outlined that the information would be available on the Council's website from March 2019. Event organisers who wished to stage events in Council parks would be encouraged to avail of the approved list of suppliers to ensure that their events were managed and delivered in a safe manner. This would also help third party organisers to improve the planning of events and would reduce the effort involved in them providing documentation and certificates.

The Committee authorised the collation of a list of approved suppliers for the provision of services at events in parks and open spaces for use by third party event organisers.

**Classification of Registered Housing Associations in Northern Ireland
Consultation Response – The Future of the House Sales Schemes**

The Committee considered the following report:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 In this consultation the Department for Communities (DFC) is seeking views on the future of the House Sales Scheme (HSS). The House Sales Scheme is Northern Ireland's equivalent to the 'Right to Buy' Scheme in other jurisdictions. Registered Housing Associations are currently the only organisations that develop new social homes in Northern Ireland, although the HSS also applies to existing NIHE social housing tenants.

1.2 This consultation seeks views on the next stage of the Department's work in response to a decision by the Office for National Statistics in September 2016 to reclassify Registered Housing Associations in Northern Ireland from the private to the public sector. In September 2016 the Northern Ireland Executive agreed that officials should work to reverse the Office for National Statistics' decision including bringing forward options for amendments to legislation where appropriate. Any decision on whether and how to amend legislation arising from this consultation will be solely for Ministers to consider and take decisions. The purpose of the consultation exercise is to seek views on the options available so that these can be incorporated into the advice that will be provided to Ministers on the issues.

1.3 This is because without changes to these schemes it is likely that the Office for National Statistics' classification of Registered Housing Associations, as being in the public sector will remain in place. This will have significant financial consequences. The House Sales Schemes are Northern Ireland's equivalent to the Right to Buy Schemes in other jurisdictions. Since introduction, around 119,000 Northern Ireland Housing Executive and 3,000 Registered Housing

Association properties have been sold to the tenants over the past 40 years.

- 1.4 The consultation outlines different proposals for the future of the Scheme and seeks views on each option. A copy of the consultation can be found at <https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/consultations/classification-registered-housing-associations-northern-ireland-consultation-two-future-house-sales>. Members should note that although the consultation closed on the 24th September 2018, Belfast City Council have been granted an extension to allow members to consider and agree the Council's response.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to;

- consider and endorse the attached draft response.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Key Issues

A recent change in accounting rules for Registered Housing Associations is likely to significantly increase the amount of money that has to be found from the Northern Ireland Executive's budget to maintain current and planned levels of new social home provision. The consultation explains that this would mean the amount of public money available for other capital projects would be reduced by a similar amount or, if this did not happen, the new social home building programme would be significantly cut back. The Department for Communities (DFC) is therefore thinking about changing the rule that requires social housing to be sold to tenants.

- 3.2 The Office for National Statistics (ONS) determined that this compulsory application of the House Sales Scheme (HSS) to Housing Associations amounts to government control that is significant enough to warrant classification to the public sector. The decision of the ONS means that all expenditure incurred by the RHA's (including private borrowing) will count as public expenditure and thus be charged against the Northern Ireland Executive budget. It will become more expensive for the Executive to fund social housing in the future, meaning the social housing development programme either needs twice the budget to maintain the same level of delivery or will have to curtail the level of delivery.

- 3.3 The consultation therefore recommends ending the HSS in NI, with the expectation that this would allow the reclassification of Housing Associations back to private sector, meaning their private borrowing would no longer appear as public expenditure. This in turn would allow social housing delivery to continue at the same level. The consultation seeks views on changing this rule and outlines a number of possible options for achieving this.
- 3.4 The officers draft response following engagement internally with the Planning Service recommending Option 3, to end the House Sales Scheme for all Housing Association and NIHE tenants. However, it requests that this is accompanied by work to consider other options to support social tenants into home ownership. .
- 3.5 Financial & Resource Implications
- None
- 3.6 Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
- None.”

The Committee endorsed the Consultation response to the Department for Communities on the future of the House Sales Scheme, available on the Council's website [here](#) It noted that, in order to meet the deadline of 24th September, Belfast City Council had been granted an extension and that the response would be submitted in draft form which would be subject to ratification by the Council.

Issues Raised in Advance by Members

Support for TAMHI - Mental Health Through Sport - Councillor McCusker

The Committee agreed to invite a representative from TAMHI – Mental Health Through Sport to a special meeting of the Committee to inform the Committee of its important work in the City (along with the Community Rescue Service and Front Row Women's Rugby), with a date to be agreed in liaison with the Chairperson.

**Adventure Playground at Cavehill –
Councillor McAllister**

The Committee agreed that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee which would give consideration, in conjunction with the budget setting process, to the possible future removal of the current entrance fee charge to the Adventure Playground at Cavehill.

Chairperson